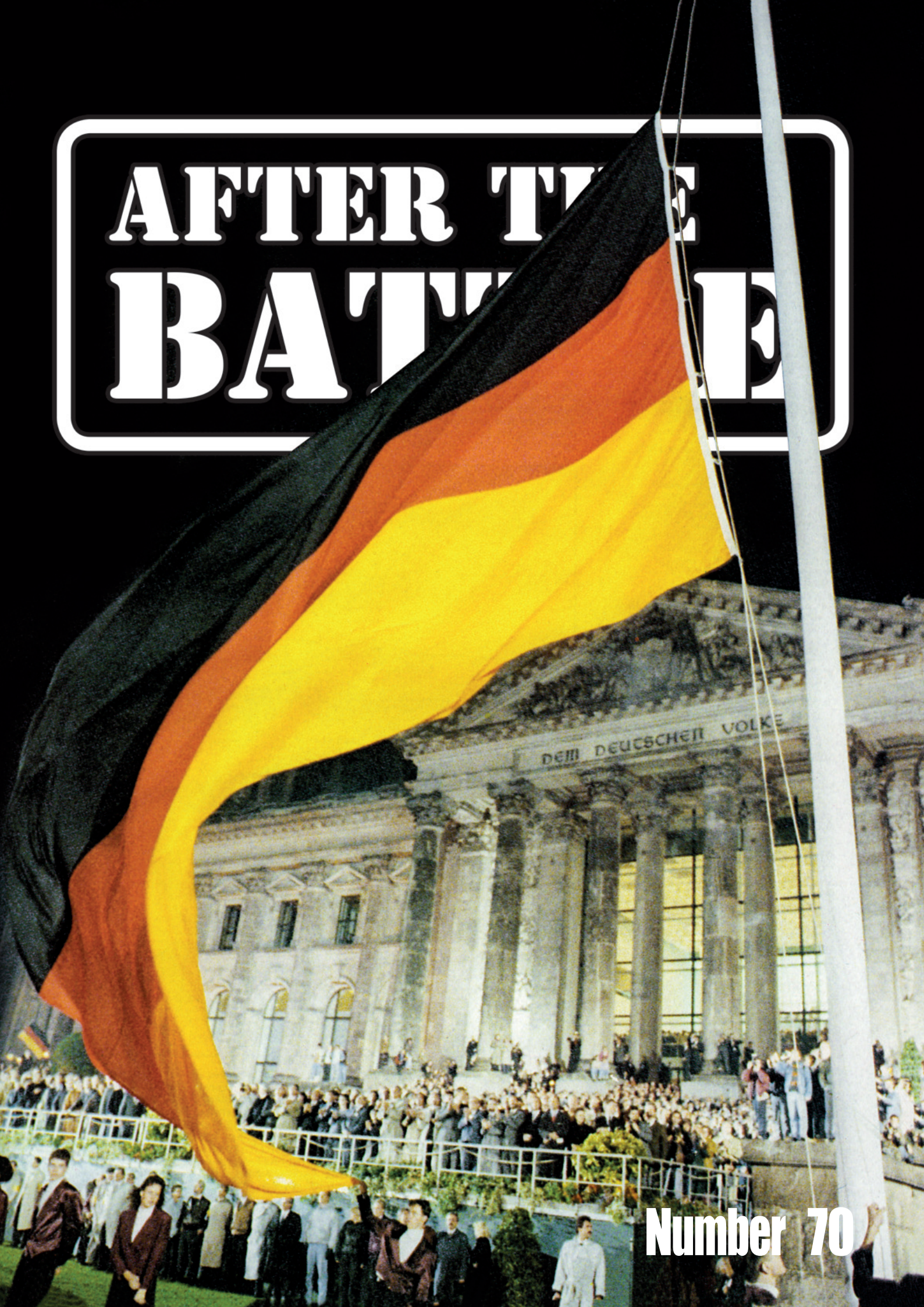
AFTER THE BATTLE



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Front Cover: Midnight, October 2, 1990. The raising of the national flag in front of the Reichstag heralds the reunification of Germany and the cessation of the Allied occupation of Berlin. (DPA)

Centre Pages: Eventide falls over one of the four mass graves in Ohlsdorf Cemetery, Hamburg, each of which contain upwards of 10,000 victims of the firestorm. The wooden beams bear the names of the districts which suffered in the Gomorrah bombing — the small crosses and gravestones around the edge being all that remain from the tens of thousands that were set up by relatives in 1943-44. The memorial in the background was dedicated in 1952 to all Hamburg's air raid victims. (Jan Heitmann)

Back Cover: The huge fortresslike Flakturm on the Heiligengeistfeld in the town centre which had been built in 1941-42. After the war the building housed cinemas and offices for the staffs of several newspapers which were published under British supervision. Today the Flakturm is called 'Hochhaus 1' (tower block 1) and it contains photographic studios and offices of advertising agencies. It is open to the public. (Jan Heitmann)

Acknowledgements: Jeff Vincent would like to thank Charles Messenger, Matthew Barry Sullivan, Kenneth Morgan and David Harman for their help in the preparation of his article on the Combined Services Interrogation Centre.

Photo Credits: ADN — Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst, DPA — Deutsche Presse Agentur, IWM — Imperial War Museum, SLH — Staatliche Landesbildstelle Hamburg

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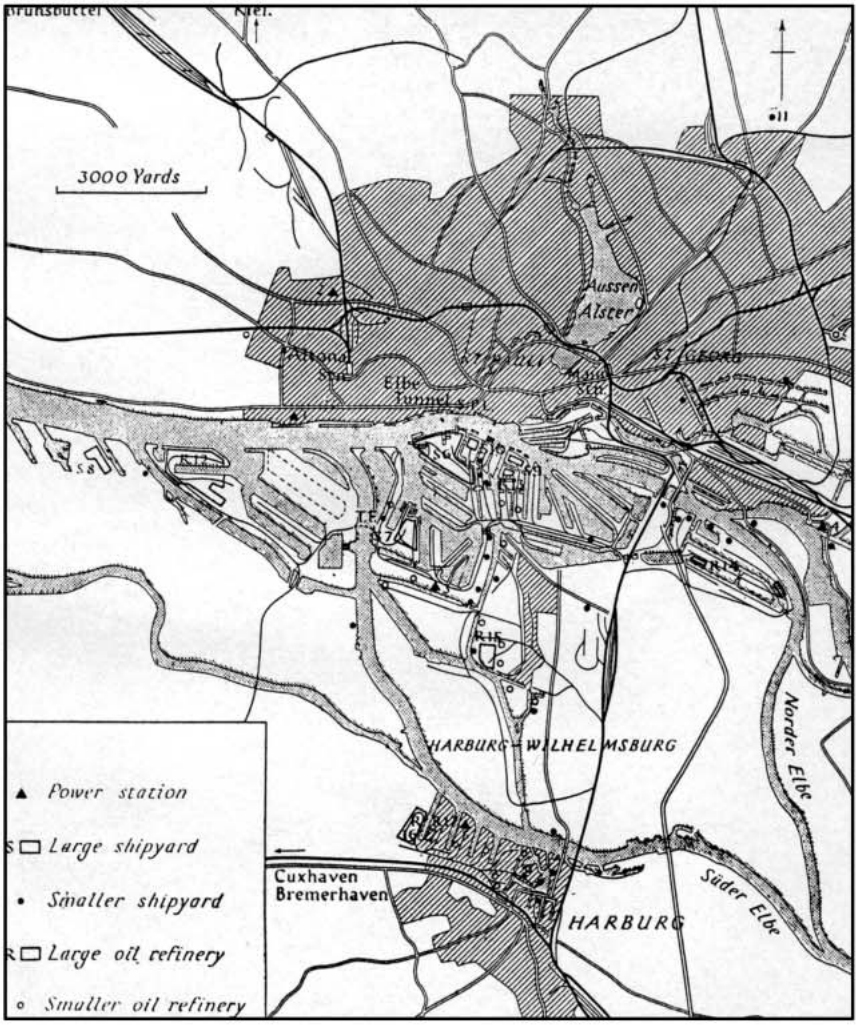
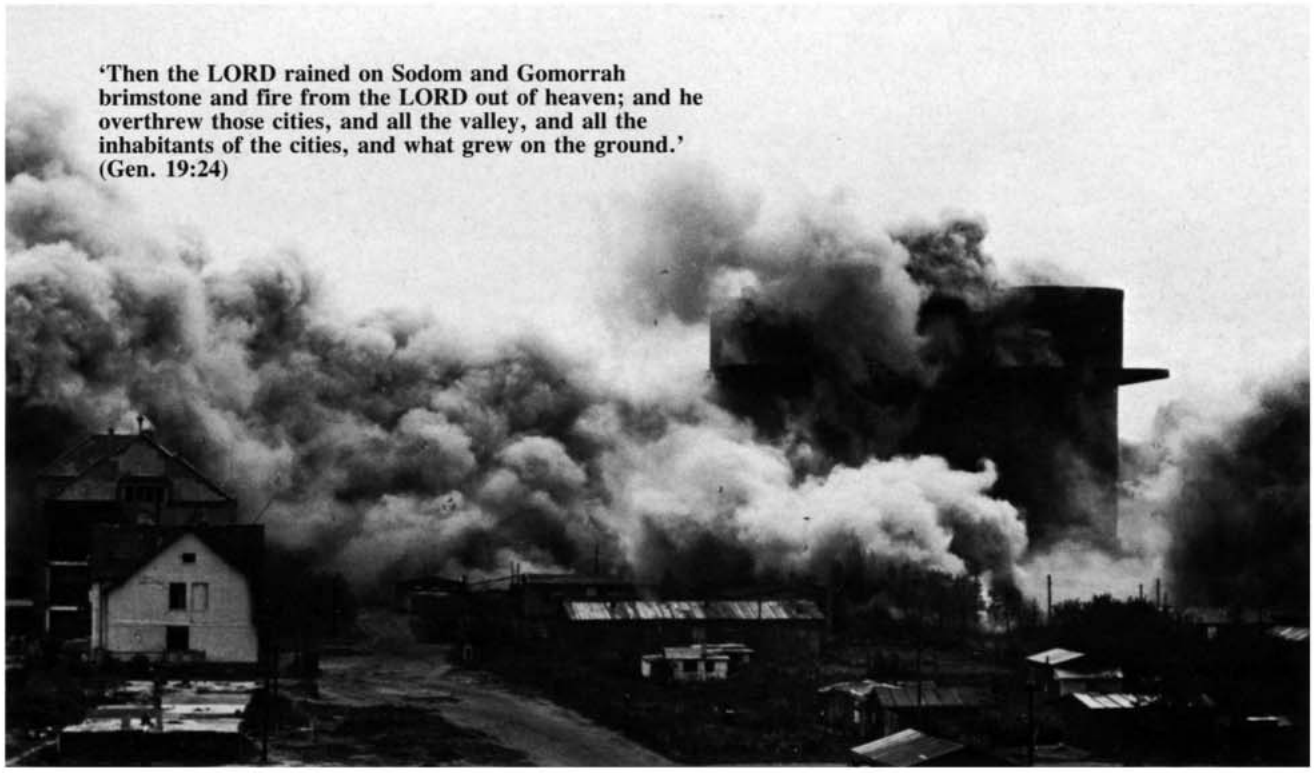
Ranking alongside Rotterdam, Antwerp and London as one of Europe's four chief ports, Hamburg lies about 80 miles inland from the North Sea along the Elbe. West of the port, the river splits into two main branches, the Norder Elbe and Süder Elbe. The city itself lies on the north bank of the Norder Elbe, with the majority of the quays, basins and docks on the southern bank. In this picture, taken in Hamburg in 1939, Hitler is discussing his grandiose plans for the city, including the new Reichsautobahn-brücke, with Dr Fritz Todt, the chief of the civil engineering organisation which bore his name.



This map, compiled by British naval intelligence, shows the distinct separation of industrial Hamburg from the residential area north of the river: S.P.L. St Pauli landing stage; T.F. Köhlbrand train ferry. Power stations: 1 Neumühlen; 2 Altona-Bahnkraft; 3 Neuhof; 4 Tiefstack; 5 Überlandzentrale Harburg-Wilhelmsburg. Principal shipyards: S6 Blohm und Voss; S7 Howaldtswerke A.G.; S8 Deutsche Werft (Finkenwärder); S9 Deutsche Werft (Reiherstieg); S10 H. C. Stülcken Sohn; 11 Schiffsbau Versuchs Anstalt (shipbuilding research institute). Principal oil refineries: R12 Neuer Petroleumhafen; R13 Rhenania Ossag (Grasbrook); R14 Norddeutsche Affinerie; R15 Rhenania Ossag (Reiherstieg); R16 Ebano Asphaltwerke A.G.; R17 Rhenania Ossag (Harburg). The thick lines show the through railways (mostly two or more tracks).



'Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground.' (Gen. 19:24)

'GOMORRAH' – THE HAMBURG FIRESTORM

By Jan Heitmann

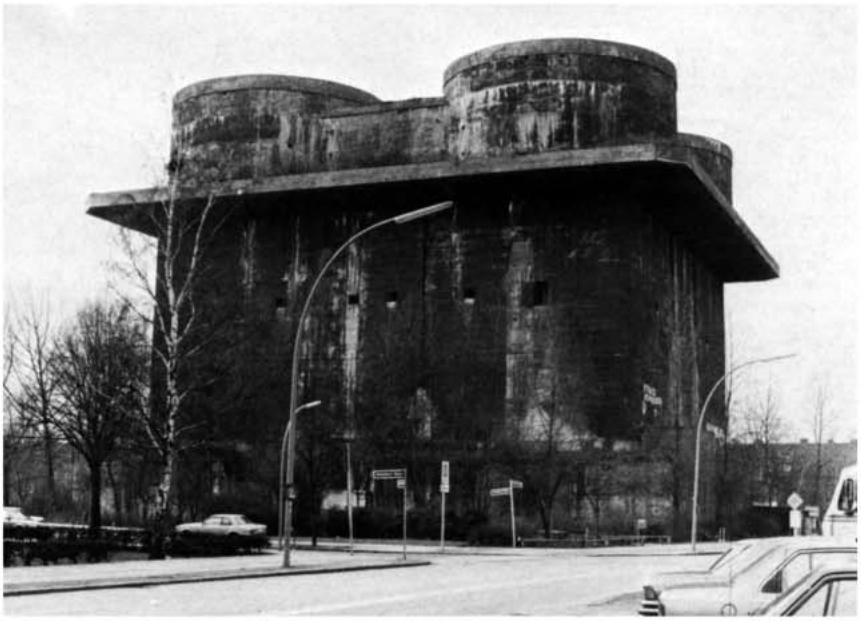
Hamburg, Germany's second largest city, its most important port and principal industrial centre whose population in 1943 was nearly 1.8 million, was founded by Charlemagne in 808 as a seat of a Christian mission. After the first impetus given to the development of the harbour facilities, Frederick Barbarossa made the city a free imperial city in 1189. Thereafter, as the nations of the Western Hemisphere gained their independence, Hamburg's overseas trade and the harbour grew rapidly but the port suffered greatly during the Napoleonic wars after the city had been incorporated into the French Empire. Another setback for the city was the devasting fire of 1842, which destroyed most of Hamburg's ancient buildings.

After the fire, the city began to take on a modern look and in 1871 it became a federal state of the German Empire. During the First World War Hamburg was left undisturbed, but a mutiny of sailors in November 1918 disrupted law and order for several days. In 1923 the Communists attempted a revolution that was brought under control only after much bloodshed. During the administration of the Third Reich Hamburg became a Gau (province), an administrative area of the Reich, responsible to a Gauleiter and Reichsstatthalter (governor) appointed by Hitler.

Hamburg was the 'Tor zur Welt', the gateway of Germany, and its population was sophisticated with an outward-looking attitude and many links with the outside world. It had a special affinity with England and the trading links between these two countries were centuries-old. In one respect Hamburg was different from the rest of Germany. The city was no Nazi stronghold and there can be no doubt, that Nazi rule in the city was never as severe as in other parts of Germany. Then came the war and the majority of those who were fit for military service were called up and sent to fighting fronts all over Europe.

It was not long after the advance into Russia that Hamburg became a community of mainly old people, women and children. Foreign workers, conscripted workers and women kept the war machine running yet the city was still the most important industrial centre of the Reich and the busiest port on the continent of Europe.

It is important to stress that Hamburg was a prime example of a city target in which the residential and industrial areas were completely separated. There were aircraft factories,



Although Organisation Todt was responsible for all the major construction projects in occupied Europe, only later in the war was its brief widened to include defences within the Reich. It was the Luftwaffe who were in charge of purpose-built flak installations — Flakturm — within Germany, and the Flak tower still standing in Wilhelmsburg was one of the three Hamburg air defence bunkers of Luftgaukommando XI which directed the operations of all Flak defences in northern Germany. Four 128mm anti-aircraft guns, a radar set and predictors were mounted on the roof. The public were allowed to take shelter in the lower storeys which had a capacity of 18,000 people. (SLH) *Above:* **Today the bunker is unoccupied but in late 1945 British engineers made a futile attempt to destroy it using explosives** *top*. **The walls cracked a little and the building shook but it survived without any serious damage.**

engineering works of different kinds, oil refineries, distillation plants, and other important industries. Hamburg shipyards produced more than 400 U-Boats during the war. The most famous was the old-established firm of Blohm & Voss which had built most of Germany's submarines in World War I, many famous passenger steamers, the heavy cruiser *Admiral Hipper* and the battleship *Bismarck* which had been sunk in 1941. There were other shipyards which carried out work for the German Navy but they had all been ordered to concentrate on U-Boat production, and one cannot emphasise too strongly the value and importance of Hamburg's U-Boat production in relation to Germany's war effort.

This is why Hamburg was far more important as an industrial target than as a military one for the Allied air forces. Sir Arthur Harris and Bomber Command placed Hamburg high on the list of valuable city targets in Germany. Harris had intended that it would be the target of the first thousand-bomber raid, which was carried out on May 30, 1942, exactly one hundred years after the holocaust that had devastated the city. Although Hamburg was the RAF's first choice of target, the weather changed and instead the bombers went to Cologne, the secondary target. So Hamburg was fortunate and what Harris called a 'centenary conflagration' had to be cancelled.

Above: **Demolition of the associated Flakradarturm (radar tower) at Wilhelmsburg, which had Würzburg radar aerials on its roof, was successfully achieved in 1945.**
Bottom: **Nothing now remains of the ruins of the radar tower but . . .**

. . . the small staff bunker of Luftgaukommando XI, seen on the left in front of the Flakturm, still stands although its windows have been bricked up. Today it is empty but unlocked.

Civil defence measures for the public took shape in several ways. First there was the cellar, which most German houses or blocks of flats possessed. *Left:* **Painted arrows showed people to reinforced basements and also helped to guide rescue teams to places where survivors might be present beneath bombed buildings. This sign remains on a building in Elligersweg in the district of Barmbek.** *Right:* **The bricked-up entrance to one of the subterranean public air raid shelters, most of which had a capacity of more than 1,000. This one is in Alte Harburger Elbbrücke.**

Of course all this was not unknown to the German military staffs and the local authorities. Civil defence measures began to change the townscape from the first day of the war. Amongst these was an air raid shelter construction programme. The first task was to make maximum use of all available cellars and underground facilities. The citizens were compelled to shore-up roofs and to build cover against the blast of exploding bombs, bomb splinters and flying debris. As soon as this work was completed, all cellars and basements were reinforced with bricks, heavy wooden beams and concrete.

With all the minimum requirements for home shelters met, the city authorities turned to the construction of additional massive and bomb-proof public bunkers to accommodate those whose homes had no basements, and for people who were away from home when a raid occurred. Hochbunker and Luftschutztürme, large massive multi-storey buildings, subterranean air raid shelters and public air raid shelters in the basements of department stores, office blocks and railway stations were provided in the densely populated districts. These purpose-built shelters were often hit but they usually survived, shaken but intact. Emergency lighting and ventilation was available if the normal electricity supply was disrupted. The shelters had gas and smoke-tight doors and, once these were closed, the occupants had a good chance of survival.

To meet the air raid protection needs in the rural areas of the city, where the home shelter problem was especially acute due to the absence of basements and cellars, splinter-proof Sonderbauten were constructed. These were mostly underground tubular galleries and circular surface shelters but not proof against a direct hit.

At the outbreak of war there had been 88 public air raid shelters in Hamburg catering for only 0.4 percent of the population. In May 1940, when Hamburg suffered its first air raid, the number of public shelters had been increased to 549 but still only sufficient for 3 percent of the population. Accordingly the construction schedule was pushed ahead, and by July 1943 Hamburg was considered the best organised and equipped of all German cities to handle a bombing attack. On the eve of Gomorrah there were 1,442 underground public shelters, 773 splinter-proof shelters and Sonderbauten, and 139 massive bomb-proof Hochbunker and Luftschutztürme. In addition to these public air raid protection facilities with a total capacity for nearly half a million people, 60,000 cellars and basements in detached houses and apartment blocks had been reinforced.

One of the 11 Luftschutztürme — this one near the Berliner Tor station — all built in 1940 and faced with red brick. This particular bunker had its windows added after the war and is now used as a restaurant.

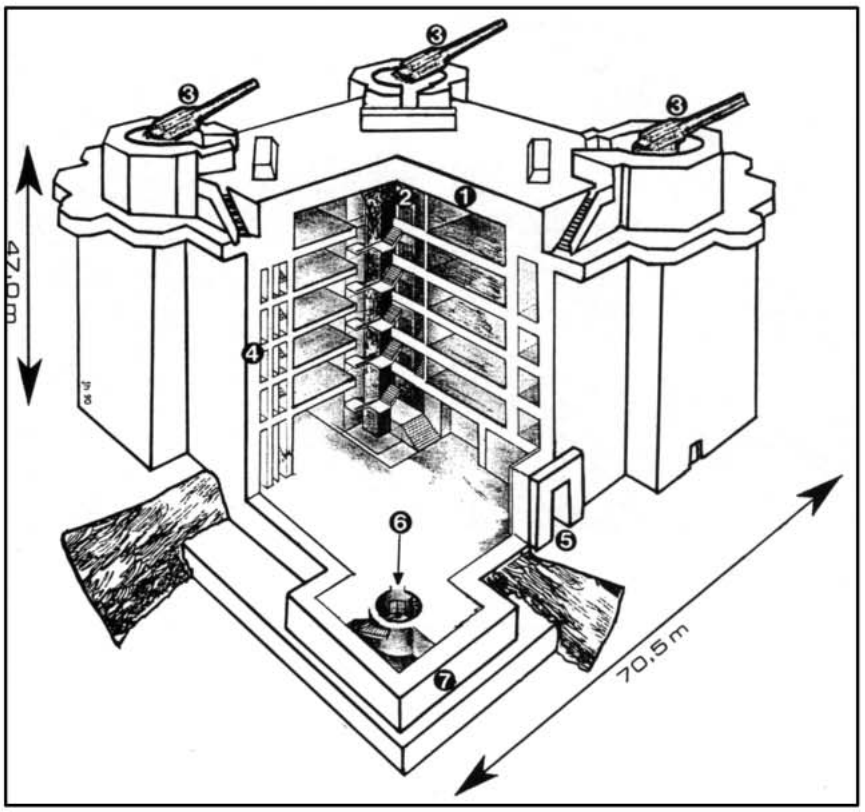
Then there were the massive Hochbunker. This one in the Heussweg in the district of Eimsbüttel had a capacity of approximately 3,000 people. It was built to resemble an apartment house and today houses a furniture store.

Another smaller Hochbunker in the Eimsbüttel district at the junction of Müggenkampstrasse and Sartoriusstrasse. This one held about 1,500 people. Note the painted camouflage windows. Now it is used as a beverage shop and a storehouse.

The public was also allowed to take shelter in the lower storeys of the huge fortress-like air defence bunkers, the Flaktürme, two in the town centre on the Heiligengeistfeld, the other in Wilhelmsburg in the south-eastern quarter of the city. Althought the capacity of the two central bunkers was nominally only 18,000 people, 60,000 people squeezed inside during the heavy air raids. The Hamburg hospitals had also been provided with seven bunkers with fully equipped operating theatres and labour rooms.

The Hamburg civil defence organisation and the air raid precautions network were regarded as the best and most effective in existence. All the personnel necessary for a successful civil defence organisation, like fire-watchers, wardens, voluntary firemen, rescue teams, evacuation teams, medical teams and messengers, had been woven into the defence system. The backbone was provided by professional police and fire brigades, which were reinforced by a large number of auxiliaries and members of the Hitler Youth. The citizens of Hamburg lent their support wholeheartedly to the city-wide civil defence organisation and the programmes of self-protection and neighbourly assistance.

As far as the RAF was concerned, Hamburg was notorious for the strength of its defences. The anti-aircraft installations were situated in two circles up to twenty miles from the town centre and it took a bomber fifteen minutes to fly right through the cordon of anti-aircraft fire. In July 1943, when the number of anti-aircraft guns reached the highest level, Hamburg had 71 batteries of heavy Flak with a total of 346 guns; 26 light Flak batteries and 22 batteries of searchlights. The heavy Flak batteries consisted of guns of various calibres: 16 128mm guns mounted on the Flaktürme, 96 105mm, 166 88mm and 20 128mm. In addition, there were 48 105mm with the mobile railway Flak. The operations of the Flak defences were directed from the air defence



The three large Flakturm — at Wilhelmsburg (pages 1 and 2) and the two at Heiligengeistfeld in the city centre — all provided shelter for the general public on the lower floors. This cutaway view shows the layout of the larger of the two towers, on Heiligengeistfeld. 1. Celing 3.80 metres thick. 2. Lift. 3. Four gun positions, each with a 128mm twin anti-aircraft gun, which were directed by radar on the neighbouring smaller Flakturm. 4. Walls 2.50 metres thick. 5. Main entrance. 6. Spiral staircase in each corner providing access to the gun positions. 7. Main foundation 2.60 metres thick and much larger than the area of the actual bunker.

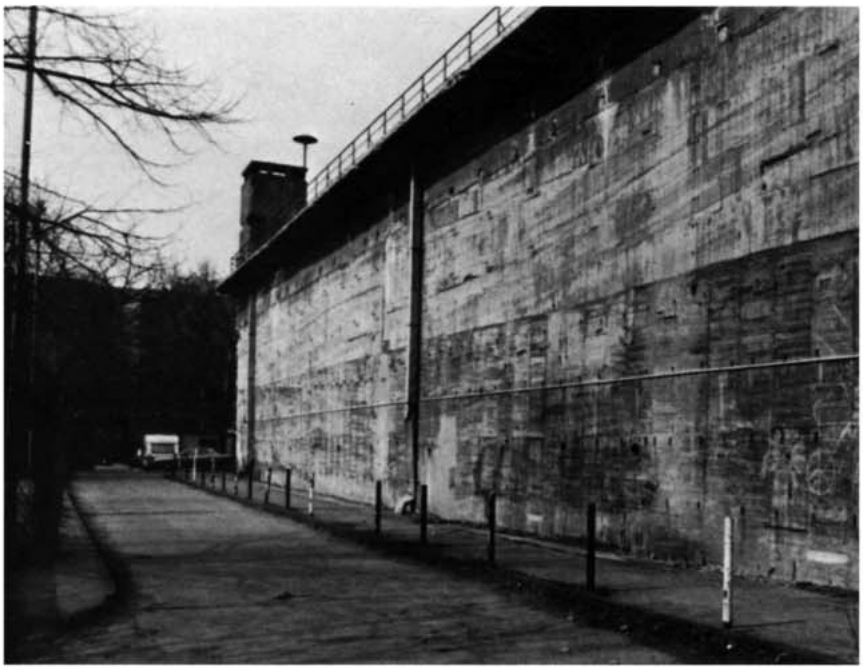
The tower had been built in 1941-42, the gun positions on the roof permitting an all-round field of fire. (SLH) ***(See also back cover)***

Left: **The smaller Flakturm, from where the anti-aircraft guns were once directed, pictured after the war. A thousand workers and 30,000 cubic metres of reinforced concrete were necessary to erect the bunker within 350 days. The foundations were up to six metres deep, the walls were three metres thick and 40 metres high, while the roof had a thickness of nearly four metres. In the first years after the war, 'Hochhaus 2' was equipped with telegraphic radio installations and broadcasting studios for the new Hamburg broadcasting company which ran under British supervision, and on July 12, 1950, Germany's first television programme was transmitted from here. Later, the building was used at one time or another by a gallery, artist craftsmen, a puppet show and a private theatre. In the early 1970s, the German Federal Postal Administration intended to use the bunker as a telephone exchange, but it was finally demolished at great cost in 1974. (SLH)** *Right:* **In the following three years a new building with modern technical installations was erected at a cost of 140 million marks.**

bunker of 3. Flak-Division in the Rothenbaumchaussee near to the Hallerstrasse station.

Up to the eve of Gomorrah, Hamburg had already suffered a total of 137 air raids which had had comparatively little effect. The civil defence organisation had been so effective in fire fighting that it dealt successfully with an average of 93 percent of all fires. In the raids prior to Gomorrah 1,431 people had been killed and 4,675 wounded. The attacks extended from nuisance raids keeping the population on the jump, to heavy raids; heavy, that is, on the basis of pre-Gomorrah standards. The last one of these before July 1943 had occurred exactly one year before and no Allied aircraft had been over Hamburg since four Mosquitos had carried out a nuisance raid on July 5.

So when Gomorrah commenced and the air raid sirens dragged the people from their



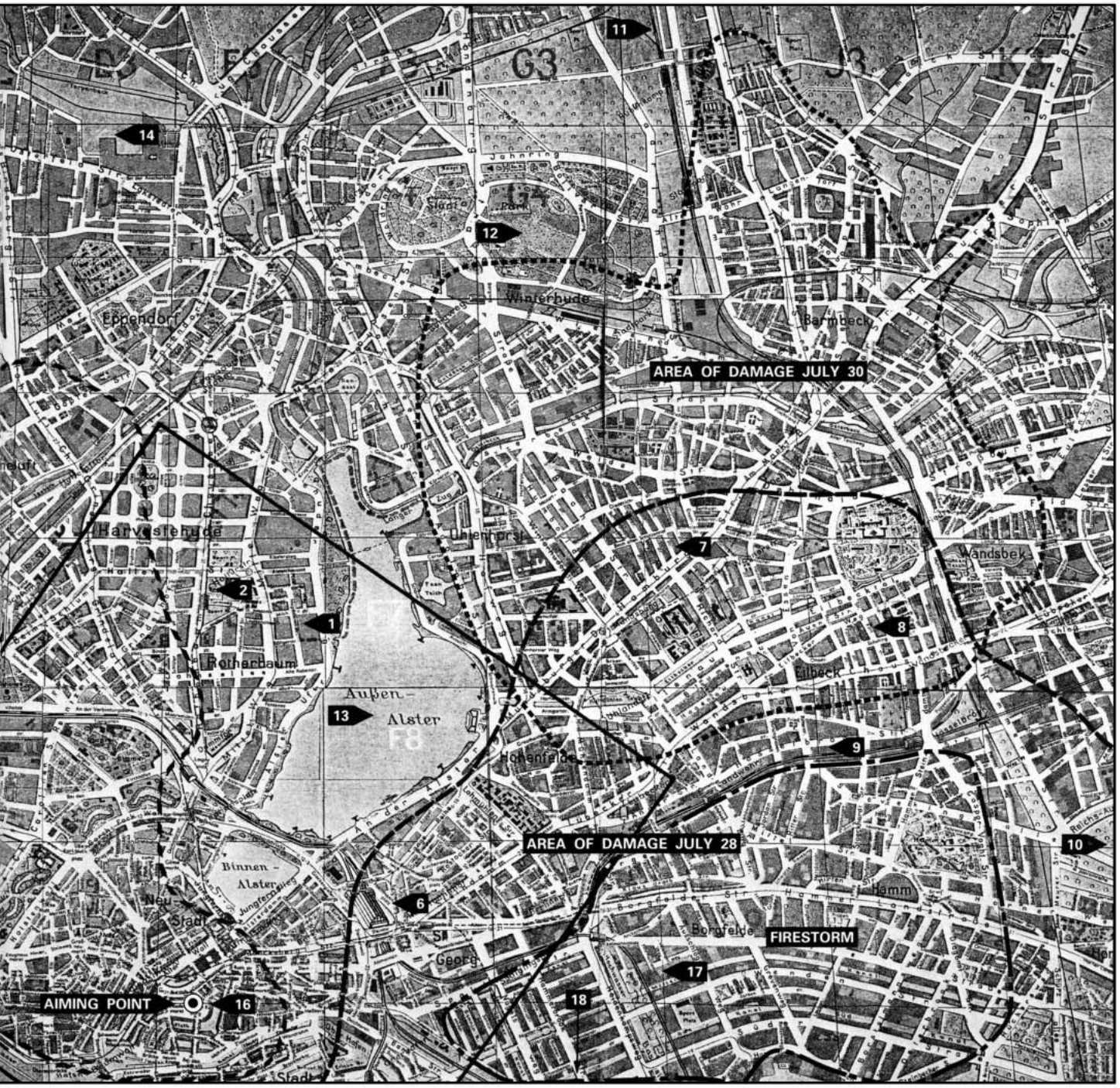
Left: **A flak position was also built on a platform in the centre of the Aussenalster — the lake in the centre of the city. At the same time an attempt was made to camouflage the smaller Binnenalster by covering it with a huge construction of wood, laths, nets and rush mats, feigning buildings, streets and trees. A dummy bridge was also laid across the southern end of the Aussenalster to simulate the real Lombards Bridge to try to hoodwink the RAF into dropping their loads on the lake 'city'. However the ruse was spotted in reconnaissance photographs so all the German effort came to naught. This picture was taken on July 27, 1943; a few hours later the whole contraption caught fire and went up in a gigantic fireball. (Crown Copyright)** *Right:* **The air defence bunker of 3. Flak-Division in the Rotherbaumchaussee, near to the Hallerstrasse underground station, pictured in April 1989. The operations of all the Hamburg Flak defences were directed from this bunker. It was provided with control rooms and every kind of signals communications equipment. A wooden hut was built on the roof in which the commanding officer and some of his staff officers had their quarters, and the divisional headquarters was located in several huts around the bunker. These vanished soon after the war, as did the hut on the roof. Today the bunker is unoccupied.**

On February 14, 1942 the Air Staff at the Air Ministry issued new instructions to RAF Bomber Command to focus future operations on 'the morale of the enemy civil population, and in particular of the industrial workers'. The bombing of areas had already been approved when weather conditions were unsuitable for attacking pinpoint targets, but from now on 'area bombing' became standard RAF policy. The new directive coincided with the appointment of a new Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Bomber Command, Air Marshal Sir Arthur T. Harris, who lost little time in introducing a series of hard-hitting raids against German cities. Mass incendiary attacks against Lübeck and Rostock on March 28-29 and April 23-24 provoked Hitler into retaliatory action with the Baedeker offensive against Britain *(see The Blitz Then and Now, Volume 3)* but it was the raid on the night of May 30 that marked a watershed in the RAF's new bombing policy. The ironic code-name — Operation 'Millenium' — and the very idea of a 1,000-bomber raid were characteristic of Sir Arthur's vigorous promotion of the concept of massed attacks against single cities. Harris's choice of target, Hamburg, was also historically symbolic, as he planned to light a 'centenary conflagration' to celebrate the 100th anniversary of a disastrous fire which had destroyed much of the old city in 1842. However, in the event, nature intervened and poor weather over northern Germany dictated a switch of targets to Cologne. Thus Hamburg was spared . . . but only for a year.

On May 27, 1943 — almost a year to the day of the RAF's first 1,000-bomber raid — Harris announced that Hamburg had been specially selected for a series of heavy raids which had been designed to totally destroy the city. 'The Battle of Hamburg cannot be won in a single night', he told his crews before the operation commenced. 'It is estimated that at least 10,000 tons of bombs will have to be dropped to complete the process of elimination. To achieve the maximum effect of air bombardment, this city should be subjected to sustained attack. On the first attack a large number of incendiaries are to be carried in order to saturate the Fire Services.' A grim portent of the hoped-for outcome was signified by the choice of the Biblical code-word for the operation: 'Gomorrah' — the city destroyed by fire and brimstone in the Book of Genesis. This picture shows the opening attack carried out on the night of July 24-25. The area depicted is outlined on the map. (IWM)

beds, half an hour after midnight on Sunday, July 25, 1943, the citizens of Hamburg made their way to the air raid shelters in a routine manner, cursing the nocturnal disturbance. However, to the authorities and military staffs it became obvious that after the cities of the Rhineland and the important naval base of Wilhelmshaven, Hamburg, too, was to be the target of a large-scale air raid, and in fact Bomber Command had already decided to destroy the city. Nevertheless Harris knew that the 'Battle of Hamburg' could not be won in a single night so he intended to make Hamburg the first target of a 'round the clock bombing' operation and the United States Eighth Air Force was invited to join in the attacks. The Bomber Command code-name for this joint operation against Hamburg was 'Operation Gomorrah'.

Also a new 'secret weapon' was to be employed for the first time: Window. The Germans called the strips of black paper with thin aluminium foil stuck to one side, Düppel. If these strips were released by the bombers in large quantities, the German close-control Würzburg radar sets, which controlled the night interceptions and the heavy anti-aircraft guns, would be flooded by false echoes and become useless. Although both Britain and Germany had been experimenting with the dropping of foil strips to act as radar reflectors, each side was reluctant to be the first to use it for fear that the secret would be turned against them. Window had even been loaded aboard an RAF aircraft in May 1942 only to be aborted at the last minute by Fighter Command's Airborne Radar Officer until its effect on his radar-equipped night fighters had been assessed. Thereafter it was banned until brought into use over Hamburg 12 months later (the Luftwaffe did not begin to use Düppel over England until October 1943).



The first bomber to take off on July 24 was an old Stirling from No. 75 (New Zealand) Squadron which left the ground at 9.45 p.m. By 11.10 p.m. a total of 791 bombers had taken off from 42 airfields to start the process of Hamburg's elimination. At 11.58 p.m. the first aircraft penetrated German airspace.

Just one hour earlier the force had been detected by a long-range radar station in Belgium. This information had been passed to the control rooms and 1. Jagddivision (Fighter Division) in Holland and 2. Jagddivision in Stade, near Hamburg, had been alerted. However, owing to Window, the German defence system very soon collapsed. The radar sets were flooded with echoes and the night fighters were sent all over the sky, chasing false reports. Eventually the ground controllers had to give up their attempts to guide the fighters, leaving the fighter pilots to their own devices. Hamburg's heavy Flak and searchlight defences, which were also controlled by radar, were also affected. The

In order to put the three large raids into context (the fourth raid in the series on August 2-3 was a failure due to adverse weather conditions), Jan Heitmann has indicated on this map the approximate areas affected by each raid. There was no pretence of trying to hit industrial targets or the port installations south of the river. The aiming point was St Nicholas Church, deliberately chosen so that the 'creep-back' in the bombing pattern would fall right back across the residential areas. Creep-back on the first raid on Saturday night (July 24-25) spread back some six miles across Altona, Eimsbüttel and Hoheluft. 1. Reichsstatthalter Karl Kaufmann's headquarters at the junction of Harvestehuder Weg and Milchstrasse. 2. Air defence bunker and divisional headquarters of 3. Flak-Division in Rothenbaumchaussee. 3. Flakturm on the Heiligengeistfeld with four 128mm anti-aircraft guns. 4. Radar Flakturm on the Heiligengeistfeld. 5. The Reeperbahn subterranean air raid bunker. 6. Underground air raid bunker beneath the main station. 7. The Karstadt department store with the huge air raid shelter in the basement. 8. Hochbunker at the junction of Wielandstrasse and Schellingstrasse. 9. Mobile railway Flak (105mm anti-aircraft guns) between Hasselbrookstrasse and Landwehr stations. 10. Heavy Flak battery (six 105mm anti-aircraft guns). 11. Mobile railway Flak north of the Rübenkamp station. 12. Heavy 'Stadtpark-Flak-battery' (six 105mm anti-aircraft guns). 13. Flakinsel (Flak island), an artificial platform with six 105mm anti-aircraft guns in the middle of the Alster lake. 14. Heavy Flak battery (six 88mm anti-aircraft guns). 15. Heavy Flak battery (six 88mm anti-aircraft guns). 16. Church of St Nicholas, the aiming point during the Gomorrah raids. 17. Centre of the firestorm. 18. (off map) Wilhelmsburg Flakturm with four 128mm guns mounted on the roof and Flakradarturm.

Bomber Command's aiming point during all three raids was the Church of St Nicholas. After the first church of this name had been destroyed in the Great Fire of 1842, the church was rebuilt in 1846-74 after the plans of George Gilbert Scott, the renowned English architect, in Neo-Gothic style. The steeple was completed in 1882. The first Gomorrah raid on Saturday night destroyed nave and choir; the steeple, built from yellow brick and unhewn stones, was completely burnt out but did not collapse. At 145 metres, it is one of the highest steeples in Germany, the ruins being preserved as a monument to the destruction of the city.

searchlights waved aimlessly around and the gun crews could do no more than fire blindly into the area of sky through which the bomber force was supposed to be flying. To the British aircrews there was no doubt that this was not the radar-predicted anti-aircraft fire they knew from the preceding raids, but a wild and uncoordinated barrage. Window had become fully effective and neither the night fighters nor the Flak defences could do much to protect Hamburg from its fate.

Harris had promised a 'tremendous show' and at 1.00 a.m. on July 25 an inferno broke loose. During two and a half hours the bombers dropped 2,253 high explosives and 349,070 incendiaries on the city. The residential areas of Altona, St. Pauli, Neustadt, Hoheluft, Eimsbüttel, parts of the docks and the suburbs in the north-west were worst hit. Although these districts sustained severe damage, the city centre was fortunate. The target marking by the Pathfinder aircraft, a mixture of blind marking and visual marking, was scattered and only half of the bomber force bombed within five kilometres of the centre of Hamburg and a creep-back of 10 kilometres developed. A great number of bombs fell in rural areas where they caused little damage. The inability of the Pathfinders and the bomb aimers to see the ground proved the basic weakness and the price that Bomber Command had to pay for operating by night.

The first of the 41,000 Hamburg firemen arrived on the scene within ten minutes of the first bomb release. They worked most valiantly while the bombs were still falling, but they were not able to contain the increasing number of fires. It became obvious that the aircrews had already achieved their goal of saturating the fire brigades. After the raid it was estimated that in the western districts there were burning buildings equivalent to a street frontage of 87 kilometres. Finally, a major breakdown in the city's fire control system occurred, when the telephone lines were cut, the telephone exchange caught fire, and the reports by the motor-cycle messengers, who suffered many casualties, finally ceased.

The streets were mostly deserted while the attack was in progress. Only the firemen and the members of the various civil defence organisations left their safe shelters to carry out their duties. Some people, whose houses caught fire, left their home shelters to reach one of the massive public air raid shelters, while others tried to save their belongings even though the bombs were still falling.

At 3.01 p.m. the all clear signal sounded and the civilians began leaving their shelters. Approximately 1,500 people had been killed, many more injured, thousands made homeless and an area of four square kilometres almost totally destroyed. Among the famous landmarks hit was the Church of St Nicholas, the city's highest building and the aiming point during the raid. The bombs had destroyed nave and choir and the steeple was completely burnt out although it did not collapse.

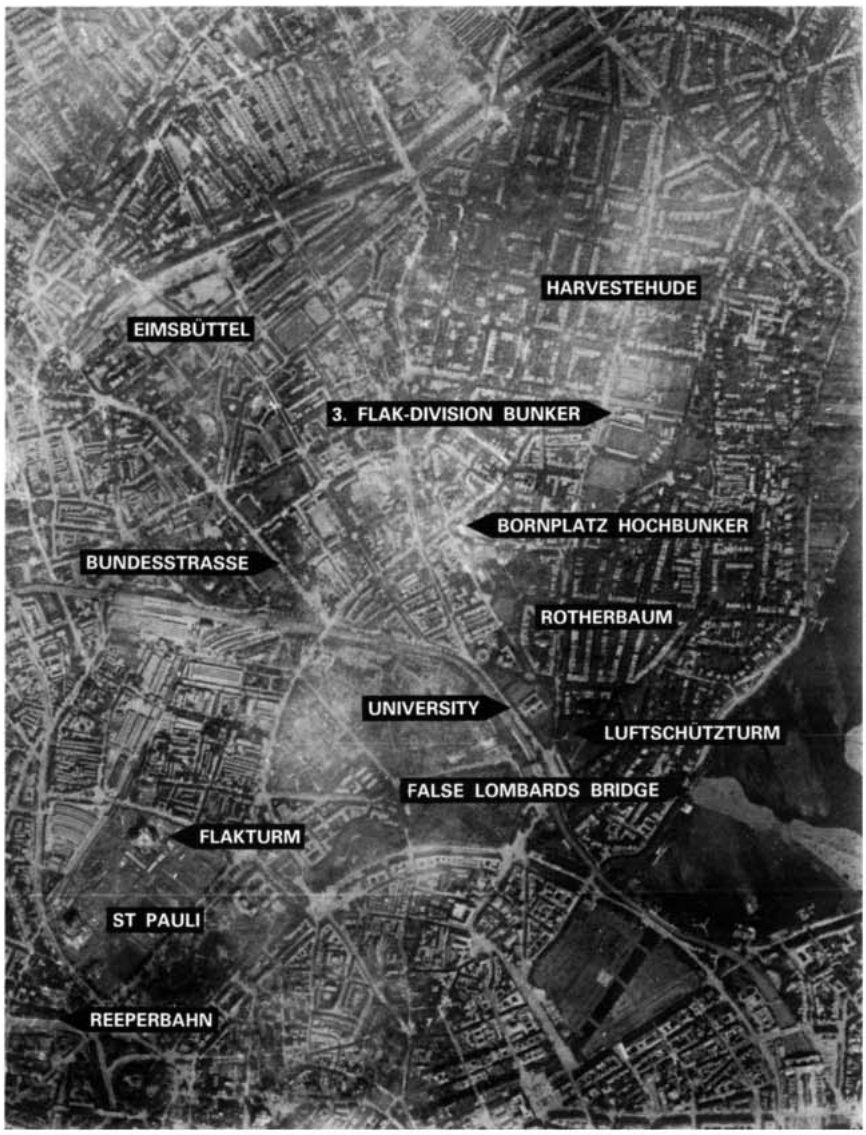
When day broke — a brilliant summer's day with a beautiful sky of blue — there was no sunlight in Hamburg. It was darkened by a tremendous cloud of smoke and dust that hung over the city. Debris, uprooted trees, dead bodies and overhead tram cables were lying in the streets. While the authorities tried in vain to obtain a general picture of the extend of the devastation, the fire brigades carried on an apparently hopeless battle with the massive conflagration. The homeless made their way through the shattered streets to the collection points where the Red Cross helped them over the first shock with cups of coffee and bowls of hot soup. The streets were full of people clambering over the ruins, searching for relatives, neighbours and friends, or making their way back to their homes. Many were suffering from shock. Every military unit in and around the city was mobilised and firefighting teams from all over northern Germany and more distant locations were on the way to Hamburg to reinforce the local brigades.

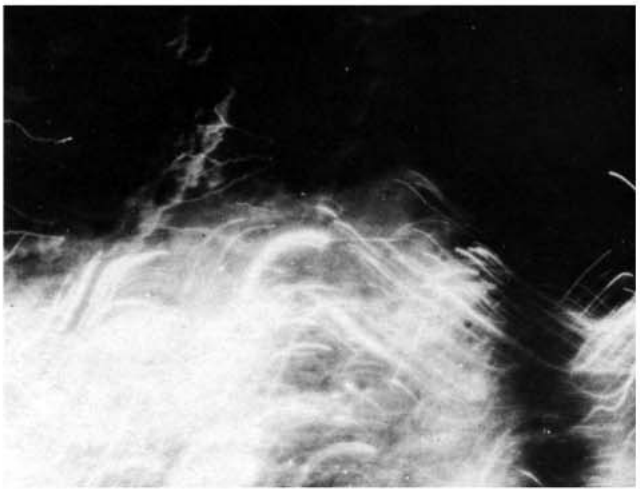
St Pauli was one of the worst hit districts on the first raid, and this Hochbunker on Thadenstrasse still bears its scars from blast.

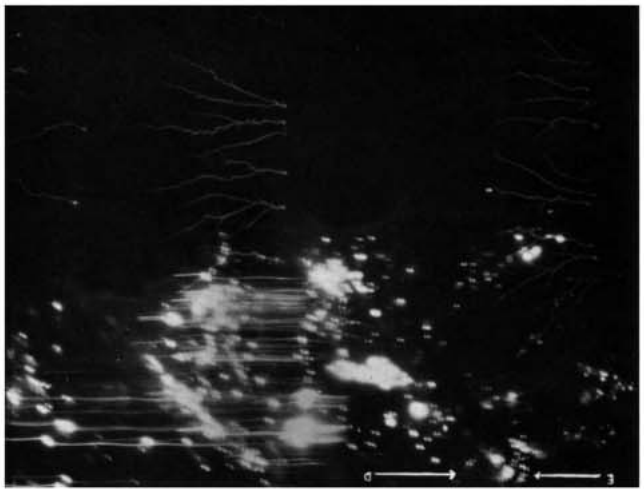
On Tuesday, a Spitfire from No. 542 Squadron was over the city photographing the main area bombed on July 25. The American daylight raids on Sunday and Monday had been aimed at the industrial areas south of the river. One of their targets was the Blohm & Voss U-Boat yards but they found the area still covered with smoke from the Bomber Command raid and the Eighth Air Force refrained from any future follow-up operations in such circumstances. They did, however, knock out the city power station at Neuhof — see map IFC. (Crown Copyright)

The second attack began that same day at 4.30 p.m. and was directed primarily at the port, the Wilhelmsburg industrial district, and the centre of the city. This daylight attack was mounted by the United States Eighth Air Force, as was the third raid the next day, at about 11.00 a.m., levelled at industrial installations in Harburg and Wilhelmsburg. These two raids were carried out by fewer aircraft — 40 in the first raid and 71 in the second — and they failed to achieve the anticipated results. Hamburg's Flak and German fighters gave the bombers a warm welcome and at least 15 of the aircraft were shot down. The primary targets, the Blohm & Voss U-Boat yards and the Klöckner aero engine factory, were still covered by smoke from the RAF attack and the targets were not visible for the bomb aimers. Besides that, artificial smoke from German smoke generators added to the confusion and most of the bombs exploded harmlessly in the water although some factories, oil refineries and shipyards were hit. However, the almost complete destruction of the Neuhof power station crippled the nerve centre of the city. Few people in the residential areas were troubled by these daylight raids, casualties amounting to 150 killed.

On Tuesday, July 27, six Mosquitos carried out a nuisance raid between 00.20 a.m. and 01.02 a.m. but dropped only two bombs between them. The rest of the day was quiet but it was the lull before the storm and when the sirens sounded again at 11.38 p.m. the most terrible part of the battle was still to come.





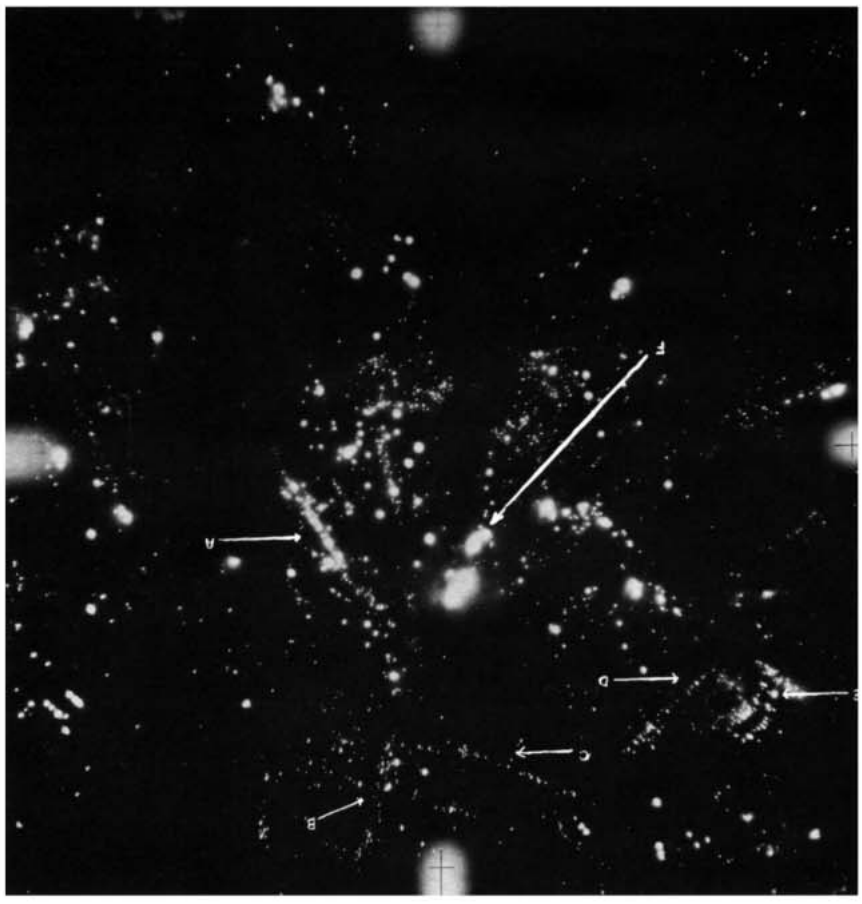


Tuesday night — the big raid begins. Although these RAF pictures are merely dated Hamburg, July 1943, Jan Heitmann is convinced that they are of the 'firestorm' raid because of the area of the city which is shown under attack. The point being made in the 'official' wartime captions is the development of better methods of damage plotting by night photography during the last two years. *Top left:* **C3830 'The bombs were dropped and a photograph successfully taken by the light of a photo-flash. One half of the photograph shows nothing but fire tracks; the other half nothing but smoke. This is proof of a great concentration of incendiaries and fires, but does not tell *where.'*** *Top right:* **C3831 'Fortunately, however, by a most ingenious arrangement of the camera control, this photograph was also obtained a few seconds later, no light being supplied by the aircraft. For the explanation of [D] and [E] see the next photograph in the series.' (IWM)**

That night 787 aircraft from Bomber Command were on their way to Hamburg to strike the second major blow on the city. This attack was destined to be the most important and heaviest of Operation Gomorrah. The routes chosen for this raid were almost identical to those of the first RAF raid but this time the bomber force was to fly right across Schleswig-Holstein, north of Hamburg, turn south-east and pass the city of Lübeck and then turn west towards Hamburg. Forty-one aircraft, less than average, aborted because of mechanical troubles.

When the force reached a point 80 kilometres off the German coast, the dropping of Window commenced. Although the German defences still lacked the means to overcome the effects of Window, the radar operators, both on the ground and in the air, were already becoming skilled in picking out true bomber targets from the false echoes of Window. The radar crews on the ground made more use of the long-range Freya radar sets which were not affected by the interference as much as close-control Würzburg sets. Thus, Window did not achieve the same black-out of the radar-controlled defences as happened during the first RAF raid. The majority of the night fighters were now allowed to operate in a freelance fashion in cooperation with the searchlights, while the remainder were still guided by their control officers. During this raid, a new means of communication was introduced by the Germans for the first time: the 'running commentary'. This was a continuous broadcast of any information that operation officers on the ground had about the enemy bomber force. The running commentary system had yet to be perfected, and only a handful of the night fighters were able to make profitable use of it during this first night of its introduction, yet some fighters had success and five bombers were brought down during the flight across Schleswig-Holstein. Six others suffered various difficulties or engine trouble and had to turn back, but eventually 735 bombers duly arrived at the last turning point, 50 kilometres east of Hamburg.

The aiming point was again the Church of St Nicholas on the western edge of the area that Bomber Command had intended to destroy: the eastern part of the main city. However, this time the bomber force approached on an east-north-easterly course so that the creep-back later developed across the densely built-up areas in the north-east. The marking, all carried out by H2S blind marking, was particularly well concentrated and the creep-back was a very slow one. Nevertheless owing to unexpected cross-winds, and difficulties in establishing the exact position of the bombers by the radar-set operators, the centre of the target marking was about three kilometres east of the planned aiming point. This error did not



C3832 — 'About the same time, another aircraft, fitted with a special camera, flew over the same area to photograph the fires. The two photographs [C3831 and C3832] can be easily matched. The special photograph is annotated to show where, in Hamburg, the fires were burning. [A] Horner Weg; [B] Washington Allee; [C] Kamp Jenfelder; [D] North end of Stengele Strasse — these streets are in the Wandsbek district of Hamburg. Other points of interest are: [E] Incendiaries burning among barracks; [F] Fires in the grandstands of the racecourse.' Commenting on the RAF captions, Jan says that 'If [A], [B] and [C] are correct, then [D] cannot be the north end of Stengele Strasse but [C] could be. In that case [D] would be Jenfelder Kamp.' (We have printed the pictures upside down so that north is at the top.) (IWM)

prove serious because the area marked included the densely built-up working-class districts which lay in that part of the main city.

When the Pathfinders arrived, the anti-aircraft guns remained silent. Some minutes later, at 0.55 a.m., when the first wave of the bomber force was over the target and the first target indicators and bombs rained down, the guns opened up at full strength. The local defences had been reinforced with mobile batteries from other cities and heavy railway Flak from distant locations. They operated successfully, although Window soon blotted out the predictors. After a while smoke rising from the burning target also prevented many of the searchlights and anti-aircraft guns from operating properly. At 1.21 a.m. the Flak batteries were ordered to limit their fire to an altitude of 5500 metres, but by now most of the aircraft below this level were already clear of the target.

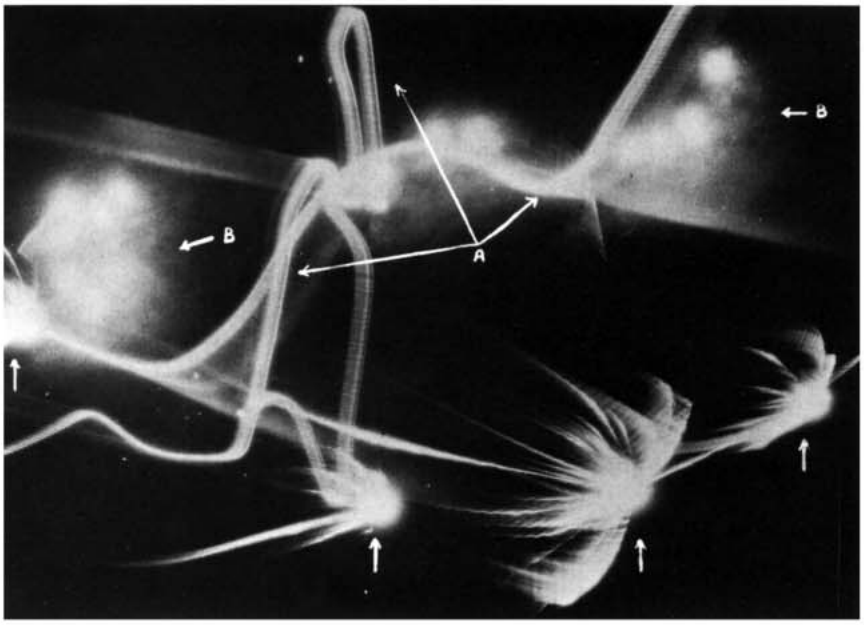
This was the moment when a further means to fight the bombers was employed by the Luftwaffe. Major Hans-Joachim Herrmann's Wilde Sau Jäger ('Wild Boar' fighters) were ordered to join the defenders. The Wilde Sau tactic was a new element in the air defence of Germany. It involved the unusual method of night fighting using single-engined day fighters, with no radar equipment, operating directly over the target that was being bombed. The local Flak commanders were permitted to fire only up to a certain altitude and above that height the fighters were free to hunt for enemy bombers which were caught by searchlights or silhouetted against the illumination of the burning target. Although Major Hermann's fighters were still in their training period, they achieved some success. Several bombers were attacked during the raid and four bombers are believed to have been shot down in or around Hamburg. For the first time, the night fighters rather than the Flak had priority in the defence of a city target.

The RAF bomb-aimers took maximum advantage of the clear and concentrated marking and they dropped a total of 2,230 high explosives (1,464 tons) and 325,000 incendiaries (975 tons), mainly on the densely built-up and heavily populated working-class districts of Hamm, Borgfelde and Hammerbrook. The districts of Eilbek, Hohenfelde, Barmbek, St Georg and Rothenburgsort also suffered grievously and the bombing caused some damage and casualties in Wandsbek, Horn and Billwerder, but in the Hammerbrook, Borgfelde and Hamm districts the combination of high explosives and incendiaries produced complete devastation. These districts of the main bombing area had had a pre-war population of 427,637 people — one fourth of the entire population of Hamburg. Those living there were mainly workers, ordinary employees and minor officials with the majority living in six-storey buildings, each block usually housing 18 families. The people of Borgfelde, Hamm and Hammerbrook had been increased by foreign industrial workers and the homeless from the areas destroyed in the first heavy raid so that nearly half a million people were under attack. These districts were not slums but well-kept quarters with mainly narrow streets and almost a complete lack of open spaces. A prominent radial route, the Hammer Landstrasse, divided the densely crowded Borgfelde and Hammerbrook from Hamm, where a more middle-class population lived under less crowded conditions. Some canals ran from west to east through the reclaimed former marsh of Borgfelde and Hammerbrook. There was only a small number of stores and commercial premises but no industrial establishments or facilities of any military value.

The first bombs hit Billwerder and Rothenburgsort, the districts marked by the target indicators, and Barmbek, where a number had fallen by accident. Some of the bombing of the first wave moved against the creep-back southwards into Eilbek and St Georg. The bomb pattern of the main force moved slowly north-eastwards into the principal target area, then into Eilbek and Hohenfelde and finally into Wandsbek and Horn, showing that the Pathfinders had done their job well. The attack lasted for only fifty minutes and the last bomber released its loads at 1.47 a.m. Everything was burning and the bomber crews could read their instruments in the glow from the fires.

During the first fifteen minutes of the raid nothing happened that had not been experienced in previous raids although the bombing was heavier and much more concentrated than ever before. In the early minutes of the attack there were only a few individual fires, burning roofs and attics, but between 1.10 a.m. and 1.15 a.m. the situation changed and the number of fires grew rapidly. Five minutes later, at 1.20 a.m., a phenomenon occurred that had never been experienced in a bombed city before.

Suddenly a wind started to blow from the west, coming from the direction of the main station. Within minutes the large number of fires in the western part of the main bombing area went out of control. They rapidly spread through the roofs and wooden floors, consuming all the highly combustible material. As the fires became stronger, they drew in fresh air from the narrow streets in order to satisfy their demand for oxygen. The flames raced along from house to house, the heat rose, fresh oxygen was needed again to replace that which had been consumed by



Flak over Hamburg. This picture shows tracks from searchlights [A]; the muzzle-flashes from heavy flak [B] — most probably from the Flakturm, and eight flak bursts arrowed. For such exposures, the camera shutter would be held open — sometimes for several seconds — the movement of the aircraft during that period smearing the image on the emulsion. (IWM)

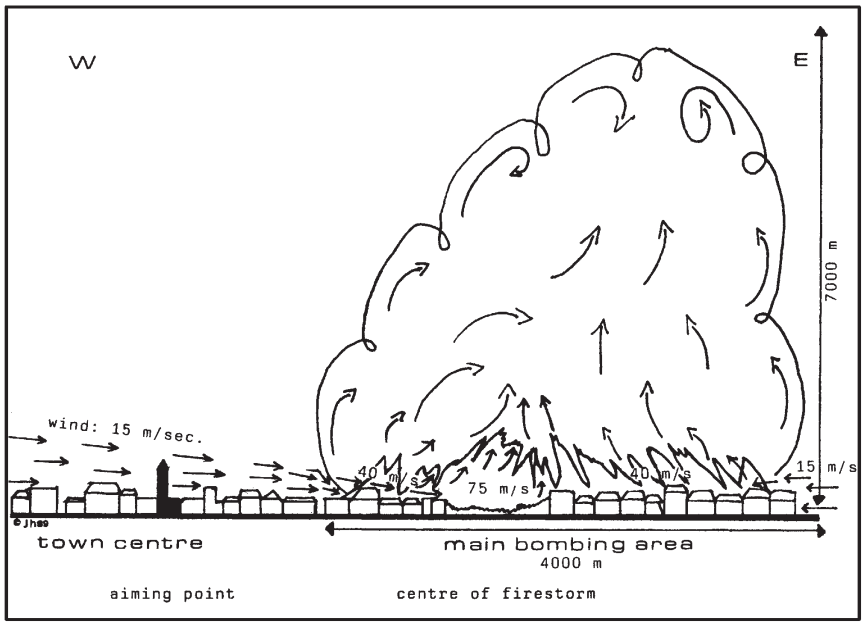
The burning tracer from intense light flak etched an entirely different kind of picture on the negative. This strangely beautiful shot was taken during the follow-up attack on Thursday night (July 29-30). (IWM)

the fires, and the air rushed through the bottoms of the buildings, the streets and through the windows and doors. The fires also sucked heated air out of surrounding buildings which had smaller fires. This hot air brought with it sparks and burning embers, which, in turn, started fresh fires in those buildings so far untouched by the incendiaries. Several extensive blocks were soon alight, each demanding more and more fresh air. This process spread steadily eastwards; it was repeated again and again until the whole of the main bombing zone was engulfed in flames. By now it was estimated that the fires covered a street frontage of 215 kilometres. Although the fire brigades and fire-watcher units worked most valiantly, they were able to do very little firefighting in the face of the overwhelming scale of the fires. Roaring out of control with even greater strength, the wind had developed into a storm with the violence and velocity of a hurricane. The bombing by the second wave caused new fires along the line of the bombers' approach, linking with the firestorm. Finally the fires joined as one, and what had previously been thousands of individual fires became a huge sea of fire with an estimated temperature at its centre of more than 800 degrees C. Although the all clear was sounded at 2.40 a.m., it had no meaning at all to the people in the firestorm area.

After the raid the firestorm became the subject of intense scientific study. It was found that there were three main factors which led to it.

The first and most important was the weather. The raid occurred during an unusually hot and dry period. In the three weeks preceding Gomorrah, there had been only 44mm of rainfall in the city and, during the month of July, the day temperatures reached as high as 35 degrees C., and the night temperatures had been up to 30 degrees C. Early in the month the humidity hovered around 60 percent, but when Gomorrah began the humidity had dropped to 46 percent. On the evening of July 27 the temperature was particularly high (30 degrees C. at 6.00 p.m. and 29 degrees C. at 11.30 p.m.) and the humidity dropped to the abnormally low figure of 30 percent, compared with an average of 45 to 55 percent for this time of the year. There was also little wind in Hamburg that night. A rise of temperature of only 2 degrees would have been enough to cause a tremendous updraught of hot air and turn the column of air that hung over the city into a gigantic chimney. The abnormal weather conditions led to an event which had never occurred before — the 'atmospheric firestorm' — caused by the mass of fresh air drawn into the burning area to replace the superheated rising air. The 'thermic firestorm' had been experienced many times in peace and war, when huge conflagrations had taken place which had drawn in fresh air to consume its oxygen, but the atmospheric firestorm was much stronger and it is estimated that 96 percent of all the fresh air had been drawn in by the atmospheric firestorm.

The second factor was the unusually concentrated marking and bombing. Between 550 and 600 bomb-loads fell into an area measuring only three and a half square kilometres. Bomber Command had learned from experience early in the war, and during the big raids on London in 1940-41, that fire was more dangerous and effective in destroying buildings than high explosive bombs. The latter were fine for targets susceptible to extensive blast damage, for the penetrating of buildings, and the wrecking of concrete and steel structures, but it had been proved that the use of both the high explosive bombs and a mass release of incendiaries caused the greatest effect. The large blast bombs tore open buildings, blew in doors and windows and unroofed houses, exposing the highly combustible interiors to the direct effect of the incendiaries. The high explosive bombs also smashed the water mains, shattered communications and compelled the firefighting units to take shelter. Craters and collapsed buildings blocked the streets, often making them impassable. Then, the mass of incendiaries started fires in roofs and attics or penetrated deeper inside the buildings to set alight the lower storeys. Also, a significant change had taken place in the composition of the bomb-loads for this raid. Owing



The firestorm phenomenon. The chance combination of hot weather, low humidity, accurate bombing, and the absence of the fire brigade, still dealing with Sunday's raid in the west of the city proved cataclysmic. As the fires became stronger they pulled in more and more oxygen which began the thermic firestorm. When the fires joined up, the rise in temperature caused the column of hot air (which hung over the city due to the extreme weather conditions) to rise. This in turn caused a tremendous updraught which created the atmospheric firestorm with its overwhelming force — the superheated rising air having to be replaced by fresh air at an ever-increasing rate. When the firestorm was at its height, the wind had a velocity of 15 metres per second (30 mph) outside the firestorm area; 40 metres per second (90 mph) at the edges of the firestorm and up to 75 metres per second (160 mph) in the epicentre where the temperature rose to more than 800 degrees C (nearly 1,500 degrees F).

In the holocaust that followed, the appetite of the fire for oxygen was insatiable, leaving nothing to sustain human life.

This is the awful scene at the junction of Grüner Deich and Heidenkampsweg ([14] on the plan opposite).

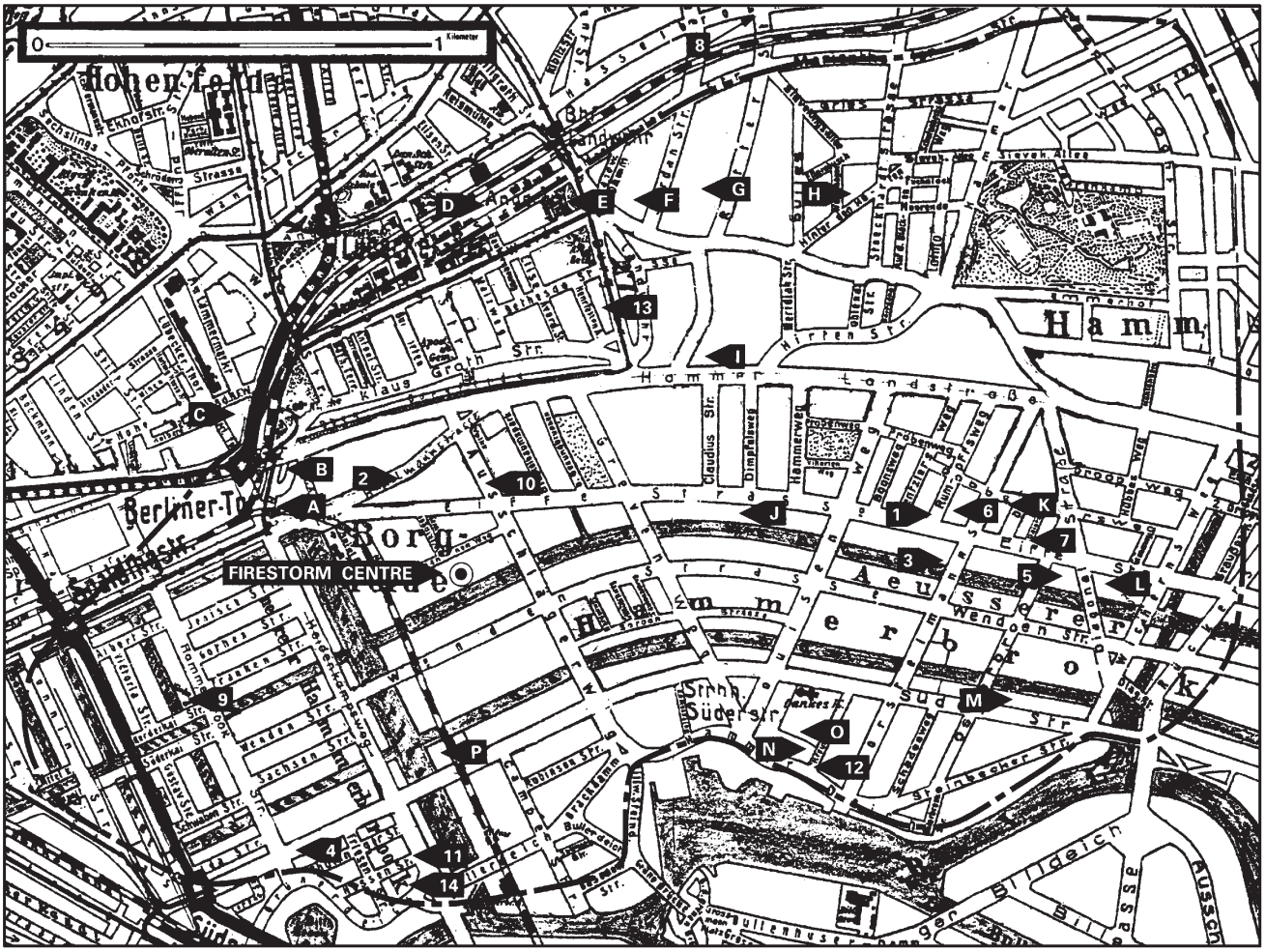
The dead assume different aspects corresponding to the circumstances under which the people died and the time of death.

Left: **An armed policeman and a rescue worker on the opposite side of the road. When this picture was taken, the dead had already been removed and the street cleared. (SLH)** *Right:* **The construction work for the new building behind the awning started in summer 1989.**

to the change of the course of the approach flight, there was a longer distance to be flown and the Stirling and Halifax squadrons had to reduce their weight by cutting down on high explosives, replacing them by lighter incendiary loads.

The third factor leading to the firestorm was the absence of fire brigades and civil defence units in the main bombing area. In the afternoon of that same day, all available firefighting units, vehicles and equipment had been sent to the western parts of the city to extinguish the still smouldering fires which had been started during the RAF raid three nights earlier. Gauleiter Karl Kaufmann, the head of the Hamburg central administration, had ordered a maximum effort to put out these fires completely. Thus the majority of the Hamburg brigades were on the wrong side of the city when the firestorm started. When they finally reached the main bombing area in the east, it was too late to prevent fires joining up.

There were only a few of the purpose-built Hochbunker and bomb-proof public air raid shelters in the firestorm area so the vast majority of civilians had taken shelter in the hundreds of reinforced basement shelters of their apartment blocks. When the firestorm commenced, and the houses above and in the neighbourhood caught fire, the temperature in the basement shelters started to increase rapidly with the ingress of very hot air and smoke. This was the moment when the people had to decide whether to stay or to leave and try to find safety elsewhere. The citizens had always been told by the authorities and air raid wardens that there was no safer place during a raid than one's own air-raid shelter. Those who heeded this advice, and who decided to remain in their shelters, were in danger either of suffering death from the extreme heat and lack of oxygen, or of being buried by the burning and collapsing building above. Many looked into the streets, saw that everything was on fire, decided they could not get through, and



Air raid shelters (lettered) in the firestorm area (outlined) which still exist. All are above-ground Hochbunkers except for [A], which is the huge underground shelter beneath Berliner Tor station; [B] the Luftschutzturm on page 3; [C] a shelter under the main fire station; [E] an underground shelter at Landwehrplatz; [I] shelter below Thörls Park and [P] another at Hochwasserbassin.

The morning after the night before. This picture was one of several which reached the RAF via an unnamed source, confirming the 'terrific battering Hamburg received' and 'brings home with even greater force the vast extent of the devastation'. (IWM)

withdrew back into the shelters. All those who remained had virtually no option to death and it was these people in the reinforced basements and cellars who died in their thousands. The explosions severed the electric light, the shelters shook, the walls cracked and the plaster came down. Wherever the ventilators were still working they brought in hot smoky air so that they had to be turned off. The heat then rose quickly when the houses above were fully ablaze.

As the firestorm consumed all the air in the shelters, it was replaced by smoke and deadly carbon monoxide. Matches or candles would not stay alight. Many people lay flat on the floor to try to snatch the slightest trace of clean air. Now was the time when some of the more courageous made a last attempt to leave the shelters, but it was too late because the exits had now become blocked by rubble.

When the firestorm reached its climax — between 3.00 a.m. and 3.30 a.m. — most of the victims in the basement shelters were already dead. In the shelters the temperature had risen to an unbelievable level, without direct flame, and frequently the heat caused the very brick that the shelters were built of to burn slowly, transforming it into a soft ash. Things made of metal or glass softened and melted.

Only those who had the necessary will power, courage and luck to leave their shelters in the early stages, and who dared to brave the flames, had a chance of surviving. Their way out of the burning area or to one of the very few open spaces was a race with death midst fire, wind, explosions and falling debris. It needed a clear head and physical strength to survive in the burning streets. The neighbourhoods that the people knew so well were completely transformed and instead there was only the terrible furnace of the firestorm. The will of the human spirit to survive drove the brave to almost superhuman efforts. They had to run, each breath an inhalation of superheated air, trying to avoid the falling timbers and debris and even bombs in the earlier stages of the raid. But this was not enough and luck also played its part. Only those who were fortunate enough to find a place where a little air and salvation from the flames and the radiant heat could be found, survived. Every possibility of escaping the firestorm — behind rubble, tree stumps, remaining walls or corners — was kept in mind. Some found safety in the bottom of a bomb crater while others found only death by drowning in other water-filled craters.

The number of people who were able to save themselves from the firestorm area was surprisingly large. So there are many survivors to describe the scene in the streets. They all remember the immense force of the hot, dry wind which forced open doors, broke the glass in windows and uprooted whole trees of all sizes. Anything light was whipped away at once, bursting into flames as it went if it was burnable. Even strong men were sometimes unable to stuggle against the howling storm and they had to grasp at thick trees or fences to save themselves from being dragged into the flames. The wind caught many people and threw them to the ground. Babies and old people were simply dragged bodily into burning buildings. Besides all this, flames raced through the streets. It was a world reduced to fire and noise, pain and fear and despairing attempts to escape. Those who hesitated, met death on the spot. Clouds of sparks and firebrands tumbled through the air like a blizzard of red snowflakes. The embers caught alight clothing, burned through bare skin, and into faces, eyes and necks. The people beat at their hair, faces and bodies, trying to smother the flames. Some fell to the ground where they spontaneously burst into flames. Few of those who had fallen got up and reached safety.

The city archives maintains a record of the destruction. This picture and those that follow were all taken in the area covered by the firestorm and each is numbered according to its location on the plan on page 13. This is Rumpffsweg [1] in the early days of August before the street had been cleared. (SLH)

The ruins at Ankelmannstrasse [2], one of the streets where scarcely one stone remained standing upon another. (SLH)

Nos. 74-80 Borstelmannsweg [3]. The bridge railings make a good reference point amid the new buildings. (SLH)

The junction of Süderstrasse and Hammerbrookstrasse [4], a residential area now occupied by modern office blocks. (SLH)

Burnt-out houses where Diagonalstrasse joins Eiffestrasse [5]. The houses were repaired and restored in the 1950s. (SLH)

The district of Hamm became a ghost town, the shattered streets empty of human habitation, save for the odd message to the bereaved scrawled in chalk on the front of the scorched buildings like that on this barber's shop. This is — or was — Nos. 70-72 Borstelmannsweg [6] — then and now. (SLH)

The inhalation of the hot air, dangerous gases and smoke, caused severe damage to the respiratory passages. There was always the danger of suffocation and poisoning by carbon monoxide. Shock played an important rôle and caused many deaths. Many people were hit by flying timbers or falling bricks. The rubble and debris in the streets prevented many from escaping. There were fiery whirlwinds and jets of flames which sometimes shot out of a burning building which could transform a person into a human torch within seconds while other people, only some metres away, remained untouched. Hair, clothes and shoes, all in that same moment, flashed into fire, wrapping a person in a curling flame. From time to time delayed-action bombs exploded and caused whole blocks of burning buildings to collapse at the same moment. Then a great ball of fire would erupt from the ruins, the flames racing over the ground, killing people blocks away like a huge blowlamp.

Many became exhausted, collapsed slowly, and could not get up. Some crawled to the gutters, hoping to find a little air there, but their clothes caught fire and they were

Left: **A ruined delicatessen store at the junction of Eiffestrasse and Dalenstieg [7]. Many of the stronger buildings survived as burned out shells to be later demolished. (SLH)** *Right:* **This particular corner remained empty for 20 years.**

burnt to death. Others suffocated or were killed by the extreme radiant heat. Many allowed themselves, in their confusion and indecision, to be carried along by the storm towards new danger.

Unable to make any impression on the fire, the men of the fire brigade, the police and the civil defence and self-protection units worked at saving as much human life as was possible on the periphery of the fire-storm area. According to a report of the Hamburg Chief of Police, 18,500 persons were rescued by the fire brigades, 29,000 by policemen and 6,000 others by the men of the various civil defence units.

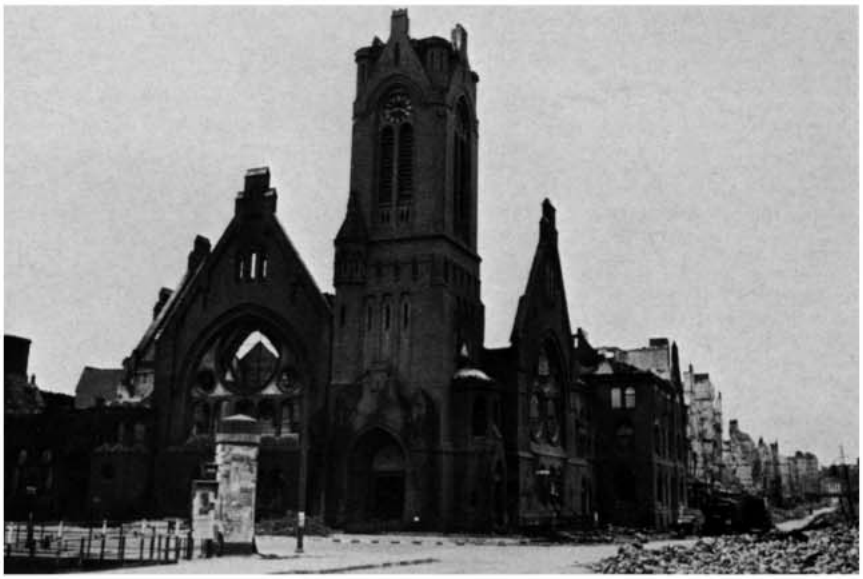
A relatively safe refuge inside the fire-storm area were the canals. Many saved themselves by jumping into the water, preferring the risk of drowning to that of death by fire. Even in the water the heat was hardly bearable. The strongest swam to the middle and trod water for hours, dousing themselves constantly to gain relief from the radiant heat and the flying sparks which set everything alight, burning thick wooden posts and bollards to the level of the water. There were large patches of fire on the water and people kept smacking their hands on the water trying to push the flames away. Those who were too weak to swim took clothes, blankets and handkerchiefs, soaked them in the water and then protected the heads and the uncovered parts of their bodies with the wet cloth. But the heat caused the water to evaporate so quickly that this procedure had to be repeated constantly. Despite their efforts, the people in the water and on the banks of the canals suffered severe burns on their hands, necks and faces. Many collapsed, then lost conciousness and died or drowned.

At last, thousands reached safety along the periphery of the firestorm area, in the open spaces and parks or in the areas which had not been hit. Most of those who got there were totally exhausted. Many complained of headaches and drowsiness. They were blistered on the hands and face and often badly burned. Their lips, mouths and throats were dry and their respiratory passages were severely affected by smoke, dust and hot air.

Between 4.30 a.m. and 5.00 a.m. most of the burned-out buildings had collapsed and all the combustible material had been consumed. The strong wind gradually dropped

Some buildings had remarkable escapes and came through *all* the raids unscathed. This is the school on Hasselbrookstrasse [8] (off map), just over 1500 metres from the epicentre of the firestorm. (SLH)

The city's most famous landmark, St Michael's Church (nicknamed 'Michel' by Hamburgers) in the St Pauli district, was also untouched by the Gomorrah raids. It was the third church to stand on the site, the first built in 1648-73 being struck by lightning in 1750. Rebuilt in Baroque style in 1751-62, it was destroyed by fire in 1906. *Left:* It was restored in 1907-12 and survived the 1943 raids only to be badly damaged in 1944 *centre*. (SLH) *Right:* Still undergoing restoration work when our picture was taken, today it is arguably the most important Protestant Baroque building in Germany.



Some landmarks completely disappeared. St Annen Church [9] stood at the junction of Hammerbrookstrasse and Norderkaistrasse and before Gomorrah had 30,000 parishioners but by the autumn of 1943 only 66 remained! With the church badly damaged and so few people to use it, it was torn down and never rebuilt. (SLH)

and the fires now burnt in a more conventional manner. The firestorm lost its force, the heat decreased slowly and the main danger passed. This process spread steadily eastwards and the last signs of the conflagration disappeared some time between 6.00 a.m. and 7.00 a.m..

The damage and casualties which had been caused during the five-hour period in which the fire had raged were almost beyond belief. Approximately 37,000 people had lost their lives either in the streets or in their home shelters. More than 100,000 had been injured. An area of 13 square kilometres was so completely devastated that scarcely one stone remained standing on another. More than 20,000 multi-storied apartment buildings were destroyed and approximately half a million people were homeless.

When dawn came, daylight did not. A tremendous mushroom cloud of smoke, dust and soot reached up to a height of 7000 metres and darkened the sun for several days. Many ruins in the main bombing area were still burning and in between were large heaps of glowing rubble. One particular problem was caused by the numerous stocks of coal and coke which continued to burn for many weeks. The great heat in the centre of the ravaged area remained but the air at least became breatheable later that day.

In the morning the rescue teams started to penetrate the perimeter of the firestorm area, and there they met those who had been fortunate enough to find one of the few

The grassy mound on the left is all that remains to mark where it stood, the dominating structure in Hammerbrookstrasse today being the new elevated railway completed in 1985.

The Bornplatz (see map pages 6-7) in Rotherbaum was famous for another important landmark, Hamburg's synagogue, which stood there until November 1938 when it was incinerated by the SA. The ruins were demolished the following year to make way for a Hochbunker which in 1946 was converted into a repository for the Institut für Bodenkunde. (SLH)

With a death toll approaching 40,000, the great majority from asphyxiation within the firestorm area, the city authorities faced a major health hazard from the thousands of corpses buried in and under the ruins. It was some six weeks before all the fires were out, and the buildings had cooled sufficiently to enable teams to enter the fire zone, and it was bound to be many more months before all the bodies could be recovered. The central firestorm area was therefore declared a Sperrgebiet — a prohibited area — and all the roads leading into it were sealed off with walls built of loose bricks. *Above:* **This was the entrance to the death zone at the junction of Ausschläger Weg and Eiffestrasse [10]. (SLH)** *Below:* **At the end of the war it was thought that it would take 25 years to clear all of Hamburg's ruins but in fact the majority had been dealt with by 1953. The new buildings on the left belong to a vocational school for aircraft construction.**

In the rebuilding, many streets were expunged from the map. Hessenstrasse — seen here blocked with the death zone wall

where it met Heidenkampsweg [11] — was lost with the construction of this assurance company in the early 1980s. (SLH)

places suitable for survival. It was a meeting with those who had seen hell and survived and who had come back from the very jaws of death. It took two days before the rescue teams could reach the hottest zone and it was several weeks before it was safe to move freely through these areas. As the rescue teams penetrated deeper into the deserted districts they found thousands of dead bodies, showing all stages of death and burning. It was not until the middle of September that the last fires were out and the ruins had cooled sufficiently to allow men to enter the basement shelters to commence the recovery of thousands of dead bodies which were sometimes reduced to mere ashes, mixed in with the general mass of blackened soot and ash.

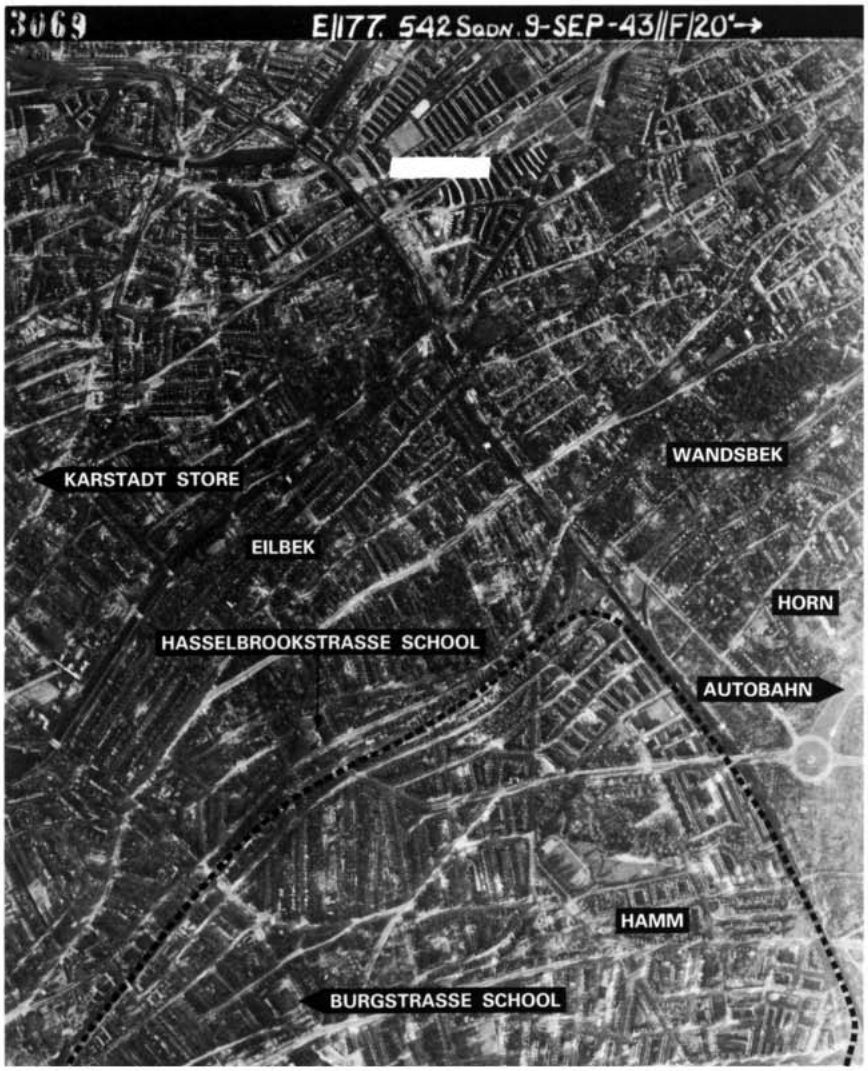
The bodies found in the shelters assumed various aspects according to the circumstances of their deaths. They were sometimes found near the blocked exits, indicating that they had tried to escape, but most of the victims were found sitting at tables or against walls as though they had fallen into a peaceful sleep. They had leaned back, trying to conserve their strength and, unknown to them, had begun to breathe the invisible and unodorous carbon monoxide without realising the danger. Finally they had fallen asleep and death had come without pain in the form of slow suffocation. Others were killed by the radiant heat. The bodies of these victims were sitting on the floor, on benches and chairs, the faces showing the pain. Families were found grouped together, holding hands, and parents embracing their children to protect them. The victims were usually fully clothed, although the clothes often showed burned-out holes which exposed the skin. Most of the bodies were shrunken and those intact were a brownish colour. The head hair was usually unchanged or only slightly singed. Many bodies were found lying on the floor of shelters in the coagulated, greasy black mass of their own molten fat tissue. Frequently nothing more was found than a thin layer of ash on the floor. In these shelters, fresh air and oxygen had penetrated after the firestorm but while fires were still burning with the effect that these bodies had been slowly cremated hours or days after death.

The remains of those who had died in the streets were usually found lying with their faces towards the ground, one arm thrown around the head. Many of the bodies were in rows or close together. Most of the victims were not burnt to ashes when recovered, but dry and shrunken to half their normal size like mummies with brownish skin. Others were unburnt but occasionally the intense heat had caused the skin to split and retract over typical areas such as the elbow and the knee. The skin was of a waxen colour and the face was pale. Innumerable bodies were found lying in the streets half clothed or naked. These probably showed the result of flames which had raced across the street with a tremendous velocity and burnt the victim's clothing, singing their skin, or of the intense heat that had made the clothes dissolve without actually catching fire. The shoes were usually the only covering left on the bodies.

The firestorm area was soon called the death zone and declared a prohibited area to ordinary civilians. Only those who had special permission were allowed to enter and many who were anxious to know the fate of relatives and friends were turned away by armed guards. Later loose bricks were used to construct high walls across the street ends at the edge of this area. A few through roads were left open although fenced off on either side.

The wall sealing the death zone on Kreuzbrook [12]. (SLH) A feint inscription chalked on the building on the right indicates that between 50 and 100 dead were found in the basement. Even today it is not unknown for a long-lost victim of the firestorm to be unearthed during reconstruction work in the city.

Many schools and official buildings survived because the caretakers and janitors had to do their duty as firewatchers. They were not allowed to take shelter during a raid and so were able to deal successfully with most of the incendiaries at the outset. *Above left:* **This is the Burgstrasse school [13] with 'Nissenhütten' amidst the ruins** *above right*. **(SLH) The school survived without damage and the building on the right was restored after the war but new buildings which were erected in the early 1960s make an exact comparison impossible.** *Below:* **This pair of before and after verticals were produced by the Air Ministry to illustrate the Battle of Hamburg and are fortuitously centred on the Burgstrasse school. A Hochbunker [D] can be seen standing unscathed amid the destruction. (Crown Copyright)** *Right:* **And it still stands today. Many shelters were still occupied post-war to ease the housing shortage — a few, like this one, being permanently converted.**



The firestorm area indicated by Jan Heitmann in two pictures taken by No. 542 Squadron on September 9 i.e. five weeks after the attack. The print *above* also covers the southern part of the area hit in the follow-up raid on July 30. (Crown Copyright)

In the districts covered by the main bombing, but which were not directly affected by the firestorm, the citizens returned to their homes and began to salvage their belongings. The first instinct of those who were able to escape from the area was to get out of the city. The early fugitives left on foot and kept going until they reached the outskirts of Hamburg or the open country. Later that day, Gauleiter Kaufmann started to organise the exodus. It became obvious that the carefully prepared evacuation plan was entirely inadequate. Bomb damage had made the stations and railway lines useless, and instead every available military and private vehicle was pressed into service to take people from one of the four designated collection points to railway stations outside the city. From these stations, the evacuees were dispersed all over Germany. A huge number of Luftwaffe transport planes and ships on the River Elbe were also used for the mass evacuation.

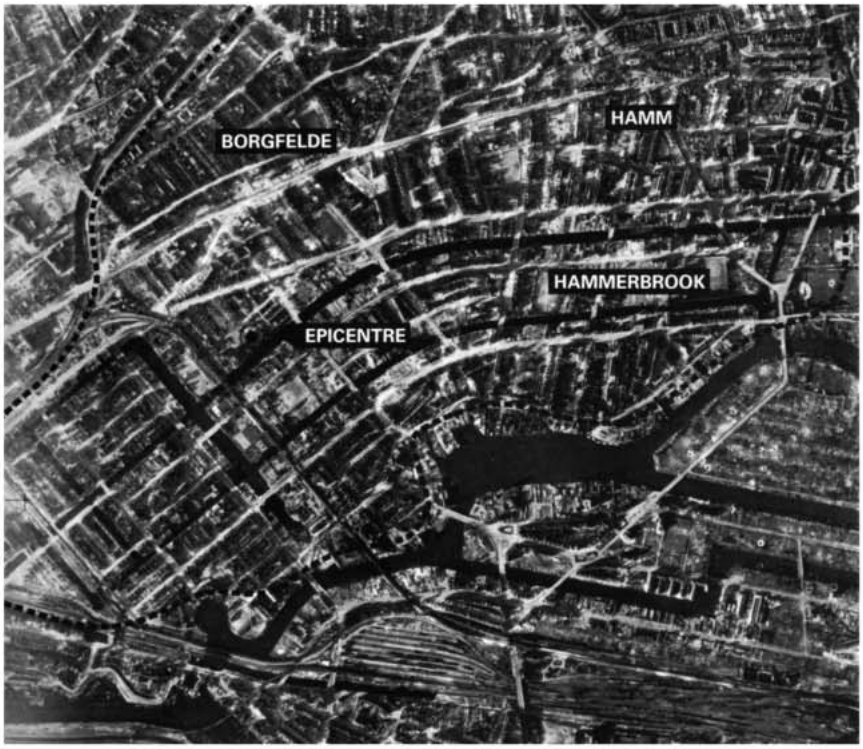
Before the last heavy air raid occurred on July 30, more than one million people, two thirds of the city's population, had fled in fear of further raids. Gauleiter Kaufmann's appeal to the civilian population to leave saved the lives of thousands on this night.

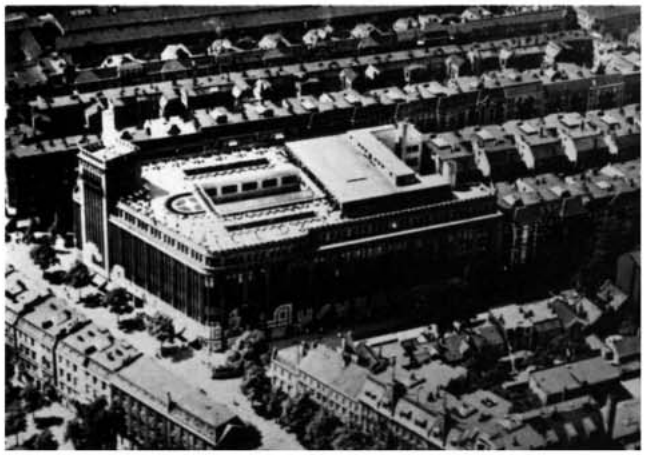
The sequence of the approach, marking and bombing and the reactions of the German defences were, in most respects, similar in this raid to events in the first RAF raid on July 25, and the citizens of the main bombing area received similar treatment. Only the main points need to be summarised here. The aiming point was again the Church of St Nicholas with the middle-class districts of Rotherbaum, Harvestehude, Hoheluft and Eppendorf north-west of the town centre as the targets. The time planned for the commencement of the raid was 00.45 a.m.

Only 707 of the 777 aircraft that had taken off were able to release their loads over the target. The Luftwaffe had learned many valuable lessons in the previous attacks and the defences had made a considerable recovery from the effects of Window. Large reinforcements of searchlights had been sent to the target area and the Wilde Sau fighters as well as the freelancing twin-engined night interceptors took full advantage of the increased illumination. It was a victory for the combined defence and Bomber Command lost 28 aircraft on this raid.

The target marking was again carried out by H2S. Owing to strong crosswinds, the Pathfinders came in more than five kilometres too far to the south-east and marked the districts just south of the devasted firestorm area. The main force bombing later crept back through the still burning ruins of the death zone but it soon reached the relatively undamaged districts of Barmbek, Uhlenhorst, Winterhude and the northern parts of Eilbek and Wandsbek. This time the main bombing area with a population of 467,000 people was again entirely residential. Both the marking and bombing were effective although not as concentrated as on the previous raid. Gradually the intensity of the fires increased until there was an extensive fire area covering six square kilometres. No less than 27,500 buildings equivalent to a street frontage of 167 kilometres were affected by the fire. The exhausted firefighting units could do little more than concentrate on saving as many lives as possible and on stopping the spread of fire on the edge of the main bombing area. Inside the target area real firefighting was impossible. Although no signs of a firestorm were observed, the material effects of this raid were even more serious than those of the previous one, and severe damage was caused over a greater area. Approximately 1,000 people were killed and many more injured.

Barmbek, an extensive residential area of suburban character, was almost completely





Above: **When the Karstadt store was built in 1927-28 on the Hamburger Strasse, (between the Desenißstrasse, left, and Rönnhaidstrasse, right) it was hailed as Europe's largest department store. With a floor area of 5000 square metres, it had a restaurant and garden on the roof and two air raid shelters in the basement, one for employees, the other for members of the public.** *Above right:* **Today a huge shopping centre stands in its place with no outward sign that this was the location of Hamburg's worst single incident of Operation Gomorrah.**

destroyed. The worst incident of the raid took place in the public air raid shelter in the basement of the Karstadt department store, on the Hamburgerstrasse. After being hit by several high explosive bombs, the building collapsed, blocking the shelter exits. When the shelter was uncovered twelve hours later, 370 people were found dead inside, poisoned by the carbon monoxide fumes from a burning coke store nearby. By comparison, a direct hit on the massive Hochbunker at the junction of Wielandstrasse and Schellingstrasse resulted in just two deaths, the only casualties in any of the massive Hochbunker during the Gomorrah raids. The other 2,000 occupants of this particular bunker survived unharmed.

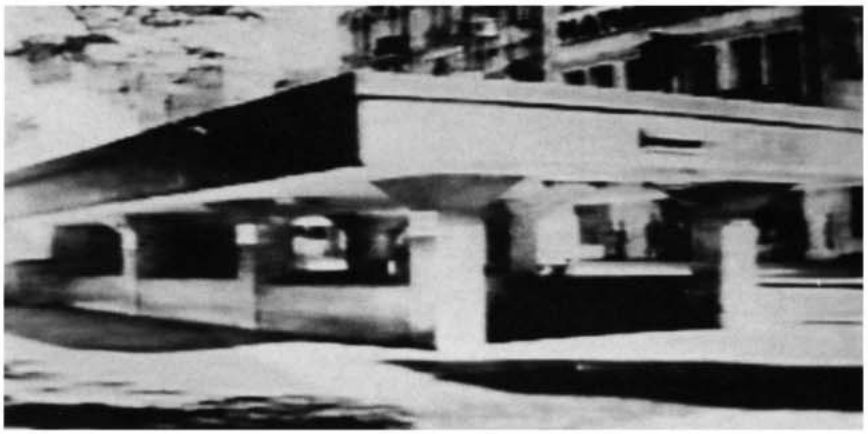
Because of a series of heavy thunderstorms, Hamburg was allowed a raid-free period lasting four days and three nights. On the morning of August 2, when the next raid was due to take place, two bad weather fronts passed across England. The meteorological officers were sure that these weather fronts had not moved into that area south of Hamburg through which the bombers' approach flight passed and the raid went ahead with 740 aircraft taking off into an overcast and thundery sky. En route, the bombers encountered a large thunderstorm and the raid was a failure. Some aircraft were lost because of icing, turbulence or being struck by lightning. The storm caused many crews to turn back and to bomb alternative targets. Many towns in northern Germany received a few bombs but few people were killed as most of the bomb-loads fell into fields and woods. A considerable raid developed on the town of Elmshorn, 18 kilometres north-east of Hamburg where the bombing caused heavy damage, killing 57, some of them refugees from recent raids on Hamburg. It is not known how many bombers found the true position of Hamburg and

It was not until long after the war that the plot was finally cleared being taken over as a car park for a car dealer until redeveloped in 1972. At the same time the Rönnhaidstrasse was widened and renamed Adolph-Schönfelder-Strasse. Today this memorial stands nearby outside Mundsburg station.

On July 30 — the third raid of the series on Thursday night — several HE bombs hit the store just after 1.00 a.m. on Friday morning. One bomb dropped in an air shaft and started a serious fire. Five minutes later more HEs hit the building and at 1.20 a.m. the wall on the Rönnhaidstrasse side collapsed. Then at 1.45 a.m. a blockbuster dropped into the inner court blowing out the front of the building onto Hamburger Strasse. Finally the Desenißstrasse side collapsed 15 minutes later, completely blocking the entrances to the basement shelters. It was another twelve hours before rescuers could dig their way into the basement. More than 1,200 people were brought out alive from the store's own shelter but all 370 occupants of the public shelter were found gassed by carbon monoxide fumes given off by a burning coke store.

Of the 139 Hochbunker existing in 1943, 100 still survive. Seven were equipped as hospital bunkers, fully fitted out with operating theatres and labour rooms. This one at Barmbek was used after the war as part of the British military hospital where Walter von Brauchitsch, the supreme commander of the German Army from March 1938 to December 1941, died on October 18, 1948 — still a PoW.

Before Gomorrah, Hamburg had been raided 137 times, a particularly heavy attack taking place on September 15-16, 1941. During the raid a 4,000lb 'blockbuster' fell in the Wielandstrasse, killing 66 including a party attending a wedding breakfast in a restaurant. It was ironic therefore, that the Hochbunker which was constructed on the cleared site in the spring of 1942 was the only bunker to have shelterers killed by a direct hit during any of the Gomorrah raids. It was during the July 30 attack that a bomb hit the side, killing two of the 2,000 occupants, all of the remainder surviving unharmed. *Centre:* **Up to 1970 the bunker had been used as a storehouse but it was then refurbished and returned to its original purpose as an air raid shelter.** *Right:* **The spot where the bomb struck can still be discerned.**



I suppose we cannot have a feature on Hamburg without mentioning its most famous street but I assure readers that it is included strictly in the context that it possesses the city's most important bunker! The Reeperbahn lies in the St Pauli district and suffered particularly in the first raid on July 25. This amateur photograph shows its large subterranean shelter — the largest in the city — which could accommodate 10,000 at one go.

Today, although the inner walls have been demolished, the bunker remains in use as an underground car park.

attacked the city. No marking was possible there and only scattered bombing took place. The fire brigades soon had the fires under control and the casualties from this raid were very small. Bomber Command lost 30 aircraft, most of them shot down by German night fighters and Flak which took advantage of the scattering of the bomber force. Thus ended the 'Battle of Hamburg'.

Within a week, 25,000 high explosive bombs of all sizes, three million incendiary bombs and 85,000 phosphorus and liquid incendiary bombs had killed about 40,000 people, injured many more, destroyed 256,000 homes in 41,000 buildings and left nearly one million people without roofs over their heads. The vital industries, particularly the U-Boat yards were not seriously damaged as the bombing had not been directed on to the areas south of the River Elbe, in which such industries were situated, but on the residential areas north of the river. The bombing of the Eighth Air Force had not been effective owing to the dust and smoke over the target and it had resulted in only light damage. Except for the introduction of Window, the Gomorrah raids were routine ones in every way, but for the citizens of Hamburg they brought the most terrible chapter in the city's history.

Hamburg had survived, but the first weeks after Gomorrah were grim ones. Vast amounts of debris were cleared from the streets and hundreds of unexploded bombs were located and deactivated. Thousands of dead bodies were recovered from the ruins and brought to the city's main cemetery at Ohlsdorf, where workers and inmates from the Neuengamme concentration camp prepared huge mass graves. The recovery work lasted until spring 1944 but even now it is believed that the remains of some victims are still to be recovered in the districts of Hamm, Hammerbrook and Borgfelde. Life returned to the city soon after the raids, when most of the evacuees returned before winter had set in. Nevertheless thousands were forced to live in the basements of ruined houses, in air raid shelters, garden sheds or in tin huts — the 'Nissenhütten' — for many years to come.

The massive reinforced-concrete building of Lederschüler amid the ruins of Heidenkampsweg. In the foreground Nordkanal meets Hochwasserbassin. After the war, the Nordkanal was filled with rubble and renamed Nordkanalstrasse. (SLH)

Gomorrah did not mark the end of the air war over Hamburg. The city was bombed again 69 times, but never as seriously as in that summer of 1943. When Hamburg surrendered to the Desert Rats of 7th Armoured Division, on May 3, 1945, the city had lost approximately 55,000 civilians from enemy air attacks — almost as many as in the whole of Great Britain.

The war was over but the very fight for life continued and the Siberian cold of the winter of 1946-47 caused many more deaths. The citizens felled thousands of trees for fuel and used up every scrap of burnable material. When the cold period was over, Hamburg had been 'burnt down' for the second time — this time in the people's own stoves!

Ruins dominated the picture and the life of the city for the next 10 years. At the end of the war it was believed that it would take 25 years to clear the ruins which were estimated at 43 million cubic metres, but by 1953 the clear-up was completed. All the rubble that was above street level had been cleared; the rest remained in the cellars and basements to be removed by the owners of the properties when they began excavation work for new buildings.

Today there is still much evidence of the war in Hamburg. Many buildings still bear the painted signs and arrows which once indicated air raid shelters in the reinforced basements. There are still a few ruins and bombed-out houses which have been only temporarily repaired. The city's most famous and most 'favourite' ruin was a part of the building of the Hamburg tax office until the remains were demolished in June 1989. The last bomb sites in the town centre were redeveloped in recent years but in Altona, Eimsbüttel, Ottensen and Eilbek there are still some empty building plots. Hammerbrook and Borgfelde, which were entirely residential before the war, were rebuilt as purely industrial districts. The canals have been filled up with the rubble and the street named 'Nordkanalstrasse' shows that this street was once a former canal. There are still many open spaces in the former firestorm area and it was not until 1988 that the Hamburg building authority started an initiative to build on these plots again.

The massive Hochbunker, the Luftschutztürme and the entrances to the subterranean air raid shelters can still be seen today. The bunkers are usually used as storehouses or small workshops. Some of them are painted. They are so strongly constructed that they can only be demolished by using explosives, which is not possible in the densely built-up city. Two of the three huge Flaktürme have survived, as well as Gauleiter Kaufmann's party bunker, from where he directed operations during the raids, and the air defence bunker of 3. Flak-Division in the Rothenbaumchaussee. (One of the Flaktürme on the extensive Heiligengeistfeld was demolished at great cost in 1974.)

In the park-like Ohlsdorf cemetery are four mass graves. Each is 130 metres long and 16 metres wide and contains up to 10,000 bodies. In the centre of the graves is a memorial, dedicated in 1952, to Hamburg's air raid victims. Along the four graves are wooden beams bearing the names of the districts which suffered from the Gomorrah bombing. Close by is a plot belonging to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission containing 1,443 Second World War graves, among which are those of 169 men of Bomber Command who died in the Gomorrah raids.

ROTHENE

BURGSORT

UNIFICATION DAY, BERLIN 1990

At the stroke of midnight on Tuesday, October 2, 1990, the war with Germany finally came to an end with the cessation of the Allied occupation of Berlin. Against the background of the floodlit Reichstag, a crowd of some two million participated in a spectacular celebration to mark the joining of the five states of the German Democratic Republic and the eleven of the Federal Republic into a new united Germany. The setting was the wide expanse of greensward in front of Germany's former — and possibly future — parliamentary building situated in the centre of the city now declared once again the German capital.

The euphoria of the occasion was profound and for those who were there it was a day that will never be forgotten. Thousands of fireworks — both official and unofficial — filled the night sky in a massive outpouring of pent-up emotion — a tremendous barrage of sound and light to rival the bitter battle 45 years before which led to the capture of the very ground on which one was standing.

The road from Moscow to Berlin had been long and hard for Soviet forces; likewise the path to reunification for Germany was also long and protracted through the dismal years of the Cold War, but both had their culmination here before the Reichstag, the symbolic seat of government — then as now.

On the afternoon of October 2, 1990, last-minute touches are made for the ceremony which was to be held on the actual battlefield of April 30, 1945. Three officers of the Bundesgrenzschutz reflect on the preparations: a raised platform for the dignitaries and a huge TV screen for the masses.

It was on the evening of April 30, 1945 that Soviet troops of Major-General Pereverkin's 79th Corps launched their final attack to capture the distinctive Reichstag building, derelict and bricked up since it was burned out in 1933. Across the same 600 square metres of open ground between the River Spree and the East-West Axis (now renamed the Strasse des 17. Juni — see *After the Battle* No. 64) on which the huge crowd was now massed to capacity, Soviet infantry died in their hundreds to achieve their goal: to raise the Red Flag above the building before the dawning of May Day. With just seventy minutes to go before midnight, standard bearers, Sergeant M. A. Yegorov and Sergeant M. V. Kantaria reached the roof and wedged the staff in one of the ornaments on the east face overlooking the continuation of the Hermann Göring Strasse north of the Brandenburg Gate.

Your Editor doesn't often bottle out of getting an accurate comparison but in this case, although we secured special permission to obtain access to the roof of the Reichstag, he just hadn't had enough vodkas to edge out along the same narrow cornice over a sheer drop as the Soviet photographer had done on May 1, 1945! This was a re-enactment of the actual flag raising which had taken place just before midnight. Sergeant M. V. Kantaria holds the standard. (ADN)

Thousands of police and border troops had been assembled in Berlin to counter any possible demonstration. In this comparison, the water-cannon of today parked under the trees parody the armour and flak of yesteryear. Then this was the Hermann Göring Strasse — now it is the Friedrich-Ebert-Strasse and, until November 9, 1989, part of the Eastern Sector. (ADN)

1918

November 9: German Weimar Republic proclaimed from Reichstag.

November 11: Armistice ends First World War.

1923

November 9: Hitler attempts to seize power illegally in the Munich putsch.

1927

January 31: Allied military control of Germany ends.

1933

January 30: Hitler appointed Chancellor — the '1,000-year' Third Reich begins.

1937

November 5: Hitler secretly declares his intention to go to war.

1938

September 30: Munich Agreement spells the demise of Czechoslovakia.

November 9: 'Crystal Night' begins the persecution of the Jews with the burning of synagogues throughout Germany.

1939

September 1: Second World War begins with the German invasion of Poland.

1945

May 8: Second World War ends.

July 17: Conference between Great Britain, the USA and the USSR begins at Potsdam, south-west of Berlin, to settle the occupation of Germany.

1948

June 18: Currency reform in the Western Zone of Germany.

June 24: Soviet blockade of Berlin leads to Berlin Air Lift.

1949

May 12: Blockade ends.

May 23: Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) comes into being in West Germany.

October 7: Deutsche Demokratische Republik (GDR) formed in the Soviet Zone of Germany with Wilhelm Pieck, President, and Otto Grotewohl, Prime Minister, representing East Germany.

1952

May: Telephone lines cut between East and West Berlin.

1953

June 17: Rising against Communist government in East Berlin.

1954

January 25: USSR rejects Western proposals in Berlin for the reunification of Germany.

October 23: Four powers agree to end the occupation of Germany.

1955

May 5: Occupation of West Germany ends.

1958

November 12: East Germany demands recognition by West.

1959

May 11: Discussions in Geneva on Berlin and a German peace treaty.

1961

June 30: Konrad Adenauer, the West German Chancellor, appeals for German peace treaty.

August 13: Restriction of access between East and West Berlin leads to the building of the Berlin Wall.

1962

August 17: First person to be killed 'escaping' from East Berlin.

1963

June 26: US President John F. Kennedy visits Berlin.

1971

January 31: Telephone communications between East and West Berlin restored (direct dialling begins July 24, 1972).

1983

September 15: Erich Honecker, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED party governing East Germany, meets West Berlin's Mayor Richard von Weizsäcker in East Berlin.

1985

November 1: All land mines and automatic firing devices removed from GDR/FRG border.

1989

January 18: Erich Honecker proclaims that the Berlin Wall 'will still exist in 100 years'.

February 6: Last person killed trying to breach the Berlin Wall — the final death toll of escapees totals 78.

September 4: Demonstration in Leipzig (East Germany) at the Autumn Trade Fair begins a chain reaction which reverberates throughout Eastern Europe.

September 10: Hungary opens its border with Austria.

September 25: 'Monday demonstrations' in Leipzig grow in size, reaching 300,000 people on October 23.

October 7: 40th anniversary of the GDR. Honecker attempts to take hard-line measures, but Mikhail Gorbachev warns that 'Life punishes those who come too late'.

October 18: Honecker ousted from office and replaced by Egon Krenz.

November 4: Largest demonstration ever with 1 million GDR citizens calling for democracy.

November 7: Entire GDR Council of Ministers resigns.

November 9: GDR opens its border with the FRG.

November 11-12: Half a million GDR citizens visit West Berlin, bringing the city to a standstill.

December 6: Egon Krenz resigns, Gregor Gysi becoming head of state three days later.

December 22: Brandenburg Gate opened between East and West Berlin.

December 27: The East German firm Limex-Bau begins worldwide sales of pieces of the Berlin Wall to aid GDR health care.

1990

June 22: 'Checkpoint Charlie', the most famous of the East-West crossing points in Berlin, dismantled.

July 1: Monetary reform in East Germany replaces the Ost-Mark with the D-Mark.

July 17: The four wartime Allies meet in Paris with representatives of East and West Germany to discuss full German sovereignty.

September 12: Two-plus-four power 'Treaty on the Final Settlement' signed in Moscow clears the way for German reunification.

October 3: The 'Tag der Einheit' or Day of Unification. Technically, the Allied occupation rights merely suspended at midnight on October 2, pending ratification of the 'Treaty on the Final Settlement' by the governments of Britain, France, the USA and the USSR.

The road from defeat to reunification spanned 45 years — symbolised by these three pictures of the western face of the Brandenburger Tor. *Above:* President John Kennedy came to Berlin in June 1963 at the height of the Cold War and was taken by West Berlin's Mayor, Willi Brandt, to see the Berlin Wall which had been erected two years previously. However, the East Berlin authorities attempted to counter the visit and had hung red cloth in the openings to hide the view into — or from — the other side. Kennedy's remarks in Berlin that day are now legendary: 'All free men, wherever they may live, are citizens of Berlin, and therefore, as a free man, I take pride in the words: Ich bin ein Berliner.' (ADN/Associated Press)

A Tuesday evening in October. Floodlights which once covered the death strip now light the way for the tumultuous crowds packing the Strasse des 17. Juni (named after the day of the 1953 uprising) surging towards the Platz der Republik in front of the Reichstag. Unofficial fireworks bring a festive atmosphere to the occasion. (The Quadriga of Victory is missing from the top of the Gate, being under repair after it had been damaged nine months previously by New Year's Eve revellers — a sad incident which resulted in injuries and loss of life marring the beginning of Germany's year of triumph.)

Berlin Commandant, Colonel-General Nikolai Berzarin (with cigarette), is interviewed by Soviet news correspondents outside the ruined Reichstag. The building was repaired from 1957 to 1971 during which time the interior was totally gutted and the dome removed. (ADN)

Now, in October 1990, the raising of another flag — this time of black, red and gold — in front of that same building was to mark Germany's finest hour. At five minutes to midnight the huge banner, held taut by ten flagbearers, five from the East and five from the West, was slowly paraded to the flagpole specially erected on the right front of the old Königs Platz in front of the Reichstag. As the strains of Beethoven's *Jorckscher Marsch* were drowned out by the deafening crescendo of screeches and explosions of the impromptu firework display from the crowd, the 'Fahne der Einheit' — the Flag of Unity — was slowly raised amid the glare of the floodlights. The cheering rose to a tumultuous climax as German President, Richard von Weizsäcker, declared that 'In free self-determination we will complete Germany's unity and freedom. For our task we are aware of our responsibility towards God and the people. We want to serve peace and the world in a united Europe.'

With a rather unfortunate gesture of his hand, Chancellor Helmut Kohl salutes a crowd estimated at least a million shortly after midnight. He is accompanied by his wife Hannelore, Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher (left) and President Richard von Weizsäcker, one-time mayor of Berlin. (DPA)

Left: **March 1948 — picture taken of the clearing up of the battlefield just before Soviet delegates walked out of the Allied Control Commission for Germany. Three months later the USSR stopped all road and rail traffic between Berlin and the West. (ADN)** *Right:* **The choir leads the singing of the German National Anthem — still to Haydn's tune for John Newton's hymn *Glorious things of Thee are spoken*. The Allies banned *Deutschland über alles* in 1945 but the third verse, which begins 'Einigkeit und Recht und Freiheit', was adopted by the Federal Republic in May 1952.**

The Einheit and the ecstasy. The floodlit Flag of Unity flutters in the breeze as the joy of the occasion reflects on every face. (Associated Press left)

The singing of the German National Anthem followed, led by the Berlin-Dresden Choir, whereupon the official 30-minute firework display, synchronised to music, boomed out to light up the night sky over the Brandenburger Tor. Further contributions from the massed orchestra and choir assembled on the Reichstag steps, interspersed with peals of bells from Belgian, German and Norwegian Carillon trailers parked alongside, finally brought the official part of the programme to a close. However, as the strains of the William Tell overture by Rossini and Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1 (without one must add A. C. Benson's words *Land of Hope and Glory*!) faded from the finale, the world's largest party began — celebrated of course not only in Berlin but throughout the whole of Germany.

Despite a massive armed police presence, assembled from all over northern Germany to quell any possible counter-demonstrations, crowd control was, in the view of your Editor, poor. Security for the members of the government gathered on a specially-built platform in front of the Reichstag was threated at one point when the crowd broke ranks and people began to climb the structure to avoid the crush and pistols were drawn by the attendant bodyguards. At the same time, the pushing and shoving on the front ramp leading to the entrance was way beyond the control of the troop of riot police sent in to stop it who themselves became victims of the crush, unable to move.

The Reichstag lies just inside the Western Sector (as was) and technically the West Berlin Police had no authority east of the dividing line until after midnight. Obviously expediency had to rule the day and police convoys from the West began travelling east down the Unter den Linden — the continuation of the Strasse des 17. Juni on the far side of the Brandenburg Gate — earlier that day. The city police force had also been reinforced by the Bundesgrenzschutz — the West German border police — who now expect to be re-badged into a new national police force. As far as the old East German Volkspolizei force is concerned, its politically doctrinaire background and poor calibre of personnel has meant the discharge of many former members, especially the older ones considered unfit for retraining. ('Vopo' uniforms are now for sale at many of the stalls which have sprung up since the Wall was opened, a complete outfit being sold for around DM120. Soviet equipment is also freely available as their forces in Berlin prepare to depart.)

With the official part of the proceedings at an end, the crowd began to move towards the dozens of refreshment stalls which lined the complete length of the Unter den Linden. The mood was one of good-natured high spirits with not a sign of any trouble — in spite of the vast quantity of alcohol being consumed. Champagne sales in Germany that night must have increased a thousandfold with the streets littered with hundreds of empty and smashed bottles. All along the attractive boulevard lined with lime trees, music was relayed from speakers, adding to the party atmosphere.

The eating and drinking continued throughout the next few hours, the crowds only melting away with the approach of dawn. As the revellers departed, they were replaced by gangs of orange-suited workmen armed with brooms who began sweeping up the glass-ridden streets with a gusto. Mechanical sweepers joined in and by the time traffic began to move, there was little sign of the nights' litter — a remarkable operation in itself.

Wednesday, October 3 — declared the 'Tag der deutschen Einheit' or Day of the German Unification — dawned bright and sunny. The official programme of events began with an ecumenical service in the Marienkirche at 9.00 a.m. attended by Chancellor Helmut Kohl and his former counterpart in the east, Lothar de Maiziere, and continued throughout the day with a wide variety of concerts and entertainment. As the cultural centre of Berlin lies east of the Brandenburg Gate, it was in this part of the city that most of the day's events were to take place.

Left: **The Lustgarten — a parade held in June 1939 to welcome back German troops from Spain. Unfortunately the East German authorities, more to satisfy political ends than anything else, completely demolished the Schloss in the background, once the former palace of the German Emperors, to build their own Palace of the Republic. (IWM)** *Right:* **The bronze-glass replacement can be seen on the right although we took this picture looking a little more to the left to show the band of the 1st Battalion The Light Infantry playing to an attentive audience. Behind is Berlin's Cathedral.**

Berliners awoke late, almost as if the whole city was suffering from a massive hangover, but by late morning the crowds on the Unter den Linden had begun to build up again as stallholders rolled in new supplies of sausages and beer.

We chose to spend most of the day around the Lustgarten where military bands from France, Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States were to take it in turns to play. Music was provided by the 46ème Régiment d'Infanterie, the 1st Battalion The Light Infantry, the 1st Battalion The Irish Guards, the Staff Orchestra of the Western Group of the Soviet Armed Forces and the US Brigade Band. They played in competition with Shakin' Lefty and Rockin' Bernie on their nearby disco moored on the Spree Canal and other musical groups entertaining the crowd on stages which had been set up round about.

By the afternoon the crowds were thick on the Unter der Linden where we took a number of comparisons specially for this article. One shows the War Memorial — the Neue Wache built in 1816-18 next to the Zeughaus — which became known as the 'Königswache' with a permanent Guard of Honour. In 1931 Heinrich Tessenow rebuilt the interior as an Ehrenmal to the fallen of the First World War when it became the 'Gedächtnisstätte für die Gefallenen des Weltkriegs' with an Honour Guard from the Wachregiment Berlin. In 1933 it was renamed the 'Reichsehrenmal' and it was used it as a saluting base for many of the parades held during the Third Reich era.

The Allies get together. Officially, the new Germany wants to play down any public show of familiarity between the former occupation forces, and there will be no final stand-down parade. However we were fortunate to get the co-operation of this Soviet bandsman to pose with his Green Jacket counterparts.

Left: **An impeccable performance from the 46ème Régiment d'Infanterie under their conductor, Adjutant Jean-Marie Fleck, as was that** *(right)* **of the Western Group of the Soviet Armed Forces. (Apologies to our American readers for the absence of a picture of the US Brigade Band, but they were not due to appear until evening and we had much to do elsewhere.)**

Just before we left for Berlin one of our readers, Mr C. W. Mark, kindly sent us a large number of photographs he had taken in the city in 1945 while a member of the Signals Section assigned to the task of supplying the communications for the Potsdam Conference. He was with the first British troops to enter the city and, although only an amateur photographer, had unrestricted access. *Above:* **His shot of the Lustgarten was not dissimilar to our own** *right*, **the square being a popular meeting place then as now.** *Below left:* **Friedrich-Wilhelm University on the Unter den Linden. One of its claims to fame was that people like Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Karl Liebknecht and Lenin studied there. It was renamed after its founder, Wilhelm von Humboldt, in 1946.** *Below right:* **Hidden behind scaffolding, advertising hoardings, wurst stalls and their customers, the square in the foreground had a more sinister history, for it was here that the Nazis carried out their spree of book-burning in May 1933.**

Left: **The Neue Wache on September 29, 1937. Il Duce takes the salute during his state visit to Germany.** *Right:* **The 'Mahnmal für die Opfer des Faschismus und Militarismus' shortly before the Honour Guard from the East German Army was withdrawn.**

After the war the building was not repaired until 1957 and the Communist authorities redesignated it in 1960 with a new inscription: 'Mahnmal für die Opfer des Faschismus und Militarismus' — in other words the memorial to the victims of Fascism and militarism. It was guarded during daylight hours by the Wachregiment 'Friedrich Engels' of the NVA (Nationale Volksarmee) and very smart they were too with their perfection of the Prussian Paradeschritt in their frequent guard changes. However, early in 1990 it was decided to abandon the goose-step march (save for the first step) and at 6.00 p.m. on Tuesday evening the NVA guard of honour marched off for the last time.

At that point, no decision had been made whether to replace them using an honour guard from the Bundeswehr, or if the inscription inside should be amended. Germans seem to find it difficult to come to terms with War Memorials as such and much heart-searching appears necessary to decide such issues. In this case a debate was held in the Zeughaus on Wednesday afternoon to let members of the public air their views on the subject. One hopes that a simple view will be taken: that whatever the rights or wrongs of war may be, the fact that millions of Servicemen died is something that deserves public acknowledgement and remembrance so that their sacrifice will not be forgotten — particularly relevant for those whose father, son or husband has no known grave.

A positive battery of cameras was on hand to capture the final goose-step at 6.00 p.m. on October 2 with the disbandment of the Nationale Volksarmee. The rifles are the Soviet 7.62mm Simonov or SKS. (DPA)

At the time of writing the future of the Neue Wache is uncertain. A straw poll was held for interested parties on the afternoon of October 3 giving people the option to vote for or against the guard to be continued by the Bundeswehr; to retain the present inscription or change it to 'Der Opfern von Kriegen und Gewaltherrschaft' (To the Victims of War and Tyranny), with a call for any other suggestions. *Left:* **The memorial was rededicated in 1931 to honour the fallen of the First World War; here Hitler lays a wreath before its altar.** *Right:* **The heavy damage from bombing and street fighting had been repaired by 1957 when the East Germans added the new inscription on the far wall. In 1969 symbolic graves were included for an unknown soldier and unknown member of the German Resistance with the burial of urns containing earth from Buchenwald, Mauthausen, Moscow, Stalingrad, El Alamein, Monte Cassino and Normandy. The Honour Guard began again in 1962, mounted by the 481-strong Wachregiment der Nationale Volksarmee, which had its beginnings with the formation of a unit of barracked police in 1949. Its traditional name 'Friedrich Engels' was added in 1980, and in 1990 the regiment was renamed simply Wachregiment Berlin. Apart from any other considerations, the changing of the guard (with a more elaborate ceremony on Wednesdays) was a great tourist attraction, and it is to be hoped that is will soon be re-introduced.**

Another problem yet to be addressed by the new Germany is the large number of Soviet graves scattered in churchyards across the old eastern zone. Most Soviet soldiers still lie where they were buried in 1945, and there are fears that these will now become the target of vandals. Also as forces of the four Allies are due to depart from Berlin by 1994, one presumes that the honour guard at the Soviet War Memorial to the 2,200 killed in the Battle for the Reichstag, which was built on the actual battlefield in 1945 and is still permanently guarded by soldiers of the Red Army, will then be withdrawn.

For the elderly, still able to remember the Germany of before the war, the Day of Unity was a dream come true — something that they never thought would happen in their lifetime. However, for those born after 1945 we found there were mixed feelings. Never having known anything other than a divided country, some fear that the prosperity of the Federal Republic is now in jeopardy with the massive burden of the regeneration necessary to repair 40 years of neglect in the east at a cost which is now expected to top £100 billion over the next ten years.

East Germans are also criticised for being lazy, having never had to retain their jobs on the merit of their performance. Although unemployment was unknown in the east, this was a falsehood created simply through every job being overmanned. Labour was directed to whichever state organisation required it, and with everything pre-ordained by the government, East Germans never had to seek jobs for themselves. One girl to whom we spoke, and who was to lose her job on November 1 in the massive shake out of unwanted labour, said that she just did not know what to do. When we suggested that she could look for a new position on her own initiative through advertisements and go for interviews, she appeared dumbstruck, never having had to think in such a way for herself. We were also told that because of the frequent hold ups in production during a normal working day in the east, due to electricity cuts, lack of materials or whatever, workers were completely unused to spending a full eight hours working!

However, all those Berliners to whom we spoke still said that in spite of the excitement surrounding the Day of Unity, nothing could compare with November 9, 1989 when the Wall came tumbling down. That was something so completely beyond belief that many people still cannot come to terms with the present situation. It was an amazing coincidence that in our issue published that month (No. 66) we featured another event which had happened on 'Der Neunte Elfte' — the ninth of the eleventh — which had long-lasting repercussions for Germany back in 1923. And five years before that, on November 9, 1918, an even more important occasion was the declaration of the German Republic by Philipp Scheidemann from the balcony of the Reichstag. Twenty years later the 9th of November was once again historically significant as it was on that day in 1938 that the Reichkristallnacht began. What a remarkable series of coincidences running like a thread through German history: four events spanning 72 years in which 'der Neunte Elfte' drastically altered the course of German, and world events.

The Reichstag then . . . and now. *Above:* **After the building had been made unusable by fire in 1933, the Nazi parliament met in the Kroll Opera House which stood on the far side of the Königs Platz. Its ruin was demolished after the war.** *Below:* **Extra seating had to be introduced to the new Reichstag debating chamber for the first session of the all-German parliament held on Thursday, October 4. (DPA)**

We have marked the occasion of the suspension of Allied occupation rights in Berlin (at the time of writing the agreement still has to be ratified by the governments of Britain, France and the United States) with the publication of the 1944 Allied intelligence map produced to identify all the prominent organisations in the city. Key buildings are numbered and an index provided on the reverse covering all Reich government and NSDAP buildings, police and fire stations, post offices, schools, U-Bahn and S-Bahn stations, embassies, hospitals, and prisons etc. More important, the street names are those in use at that time whereas both the East and West Berlin authorities have renamed many streets since the war. For further details see order form.

'LUFTWAFFE' HOSPITAL, WOOLWICH

By Andy Saunders

The Geneva Convention demanded that prisoners-of-war be afforded proper and adequate medical attention after capture, and after German air attacks against Britain had commenced in earnest in August 1940 there was naturally an increasing number of prisoners to contend with, many of whom were wounded. Those with superficial injuries were generally treated locally at the point of their capture in casualty clearing stations or civilian hospitals before onward transmission for interrogation and internment.

However, there was clearly a problem over what to do with the more seriously wounded or those requiring long-term treatment. Experience had shown that those who had been treated in civilian hospitals were often subject to antagonism by other patients, despite segregation and the posting of a military guard. Worse, those treating Luftwaffe wounded were, on at least some occasions, subject to abuse and hostility and this was obviously even more of a potential problem in areas subject to air attack. Quite apart from such serious situations, there was also the question of security and thus a decision was made to accommodate the Luftwaffe wounded in two special wards at the Royal Herbert Hospital at Woolwich. Here the best level of medical care available was to be found; the prisoners were subject to military security and discipline; and, from an administrative and intelligence point of view, it was obviously desirable that the

With so much attention focussed in recent weeks on the Battle of Britain, we felt that anything more from *After the Battle* would be superfluous and decided to rest our case on our previously-published works dealing with the period. However, there is one aspect which has not been covered: what happened to German aircrews after their particular battle was over. In this issue we have split the subject in two parts, and first we look at those crewmen who were wounded. *Top:* **Leutnant Hans-Herbert Landry was hit and baled out from his Messerschmitt Bf 109 on August 28, 1940 — an event witnessed by Winston Churchill who was visiting Dover at the time (see *The Blitz Then and Now Volume 1* page 264). He was taken to the Royal Herbert, the military hospital at Woolwich, situated on the corner of Shooters Hill Road and Well Hall Road, where two wards had been set aside specifically for Luftwaffe personnel.** *Above:* **The hospital was closed in 1977 when the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital was commissioned in Stadium Road. Today it is derelict although still under security guard.**

Leutnant Landry occupied bed 8 but only until September 23 when he died of his wounds. The other pilot who died on the ward was Oberleutnant Hasso von Perthes (bed 22) shot down on August 31 who expired two weeks later.

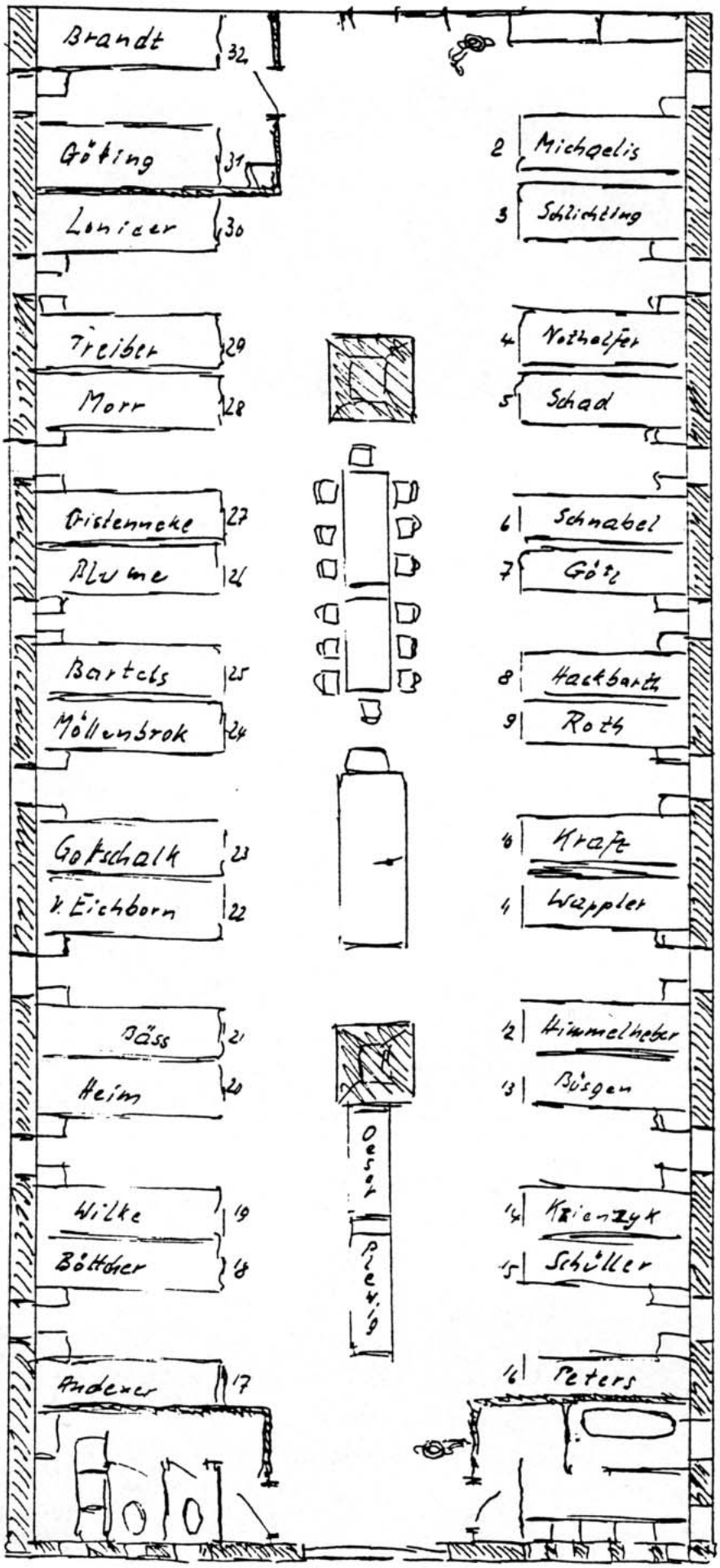
airmen could be gathered together at a central location, with NCOs located in a ground floor ward and officers and other ranks at first floor level.

One of the staff, Sheila McDermott, has many memories of the Royal Herbert where she was one of the sisters in charge of the Luftwaffe ward. Even after the passage of more than forty years, and now Mrs Sheila Bambridge, her recall of names and events was remarkable and when shown the ward floor plan the memories came flooding back to her. Whilst reluctant to betray patient/nurse confidentialities, she nevertheless provided us with a good insight into the workings of the ward and a number of anecdotes of the day-to-day life there. Generally her patients were good-natured and pleasant and treated their nurses politely and with some gratitude.

'However,' recalls Sheila Bambridge, 'there were one or two who were arrogant and less than pleasant, although these were very much in the minority but it would be wrong to name names. On the other hand there were those with whom one could build up a special bond and, despite the unusual and rather awkward circumstances, one could not help but become rather fond of some of them. Nothelfer in particular —

	Name	*Captured*	*Bed*
Dr.	Brandt	Kriegsmarine	32
Dr.	Götting	Netherlands	31
Hptmn.	H. von Lonicer	24.8.40	30
Oberlt.	C. Treiber	27.9.40	29
Lt.	F. Morr	6.10.40	28
Oberlt.	H-M. Christinnecke	6.9.40	27
Oberlt.	W. Blume	18.8.40	26
Oberlt.	W. Bartels	24.7.40	25
Lt.	H-G. Möllenbrok	16.8.40	24
Oberlt.	S. Gottschalk	3.9.40	23
Oberlt.	W. von Eichborn	27.9.40	22
Hptmn.	R. Bäss	30.8.40	21
Oberlt.	R. Heim	9.9.40	20
Oberlt.	K-E. Wilke	15.9.40	19
Lt.	H. Bottcher	22.9.40	18
Lt.	Andexer	Netherlands	17
Hptmn.	G. Peters	18.8.40	16
Oberlt.	W. Schüller	6.9.40	15
Lt.	K. Kzienzyk	21.8.40	14
Oberlt.	G. Büsgen	12.10.40	13
Lt.	M. Himmelheber	6.9.40	12
Oberlt.	H. Wappler	13.9.40	11
Oberlt.	V. Kraft	11.12.40	10
Hptmn.	J. Roth	18.8.40	9
Major	J. Hackbarth	9.9.40	8
Oberlt.	A. Götz	7.9.40	7
Lt.	H. Schnabel	5.9.40	6
Lt.	F. Schad	12.8.40	5
Sondfr.	A. Nothelfer	12.8.40	4
Hptmn.	J-H. Schlichting	6.9.40	3
Lt.	H. Michaelis	15.9.40	2
Oberlt.	F. Oeser	30.9.40	
Hptmn.	W. Plewig	8.8.40	

For this ward plan, we are indebted to ex-Leutnant Heinz-Georg Möllenbrok whose Dornier 17 was brought down near Staple, Kent, on August 16, 1940. His right arm was badly shattered, so badly in fact that his injury resulted in him being repatriated with other prisoners in October 1943 on the British hospital ship *Atlantis* via Gothenburg in Sweden, where they trans-shipped to the German *Meteor*. Obviously many of the beds had several occupants and some were officers captured on the Continent. It is therefore difficult to put a specific date to his plan other than the autumn of 1940.



everyone liked and respected him. Pre-war he had been an Olympic runner, and I recall that the poor chap had received terrible burns to his legs and, despite his treatment, suffered from septic absorption but we got him better and walking again.

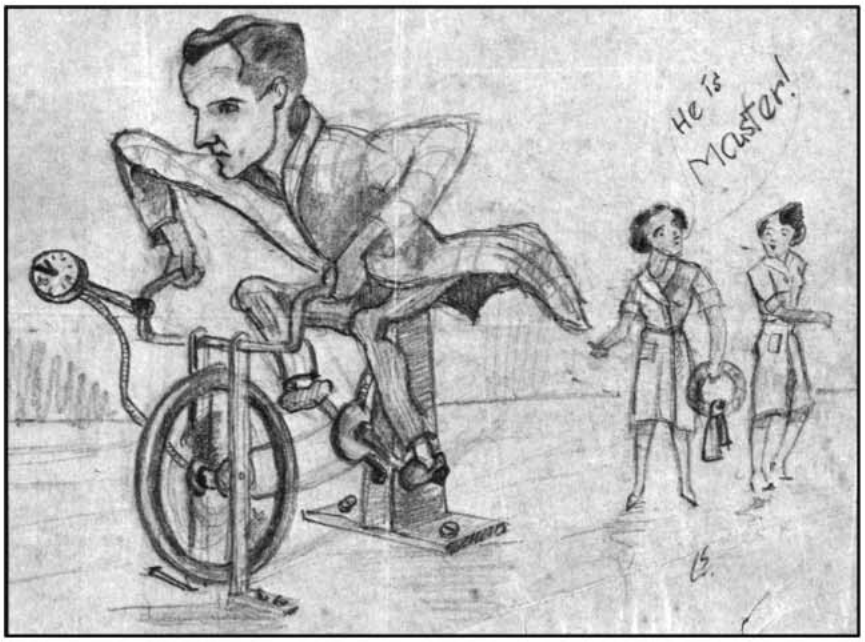
'There were also those amongst them who could only be described as "characters". One in particular who stands out in my memory is Werner Bartels who told me many amusing stories. Then there was von Perthes. He died in the ward from his wounds and I remember his calm dignity as he lay there facing death. His plight so moved one of the nurses that she vowed to write to his next-of-kin (which I believe was his mother) when the war was over. Another young man, though, had developed a boil on his bottom — in addition to his other rather more serious injuries — and I recall how he had to bite on a handkerchief to stifle his agony when I treated him for this condition!'

Despite suffering the double blow of captivity and hospitalisation, humour was still something to be found among the prisoner patients.

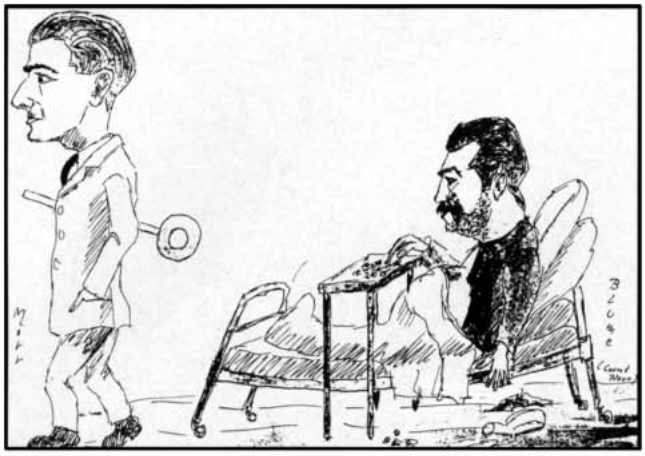
'One young man,' recalled Sheila, 'was so convinced that we were trying to poison him with our medicines that I was sent to talk to him and reassure him. Being a German speaker this I succeeded in doing. Later, at around Christmas time, he cheerfully pointed to the string above his head where decorations had been hung and declared: "Look! I've hung out my decorations on the Siegfried Line!"

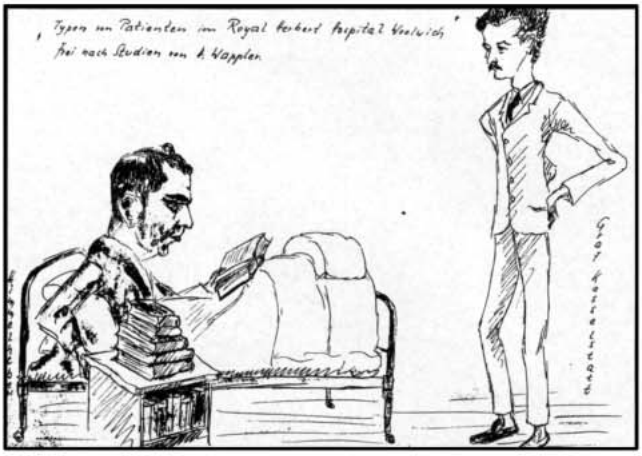
'One of our nurses was a Nurse Bowes-Lyon, cousin to the present Queen. She was a wonderful nurse and could put her hand to anything. She didn't mind what she did. Interestingly, one of our patients, too, had Royal connections — Graf von Kesselstatt being apparently related to Princess Marina!'

Above: **Picture taken of some of the staff of the Luftwaffe wards on the playing field at the rear of the hospital. Sister Sheila McDermott is fourth from the left in the middle row with her friend, Theatre Sister Vera Kelly, QAIMNS, ninth from left. The commanding officer, Colonel Blackwell, RAMC, sits in the centre of the front row.** *Bottom:* **Now an overgrown wilderness signifies the neglect of the past ten years.**



Harry Wappler (bed 11), who later achieved a name for himself when he attempted an audacious escape with Heinz 'Hannibal' Schnabel (bed 6) from the Shap Wells PoW Camp in Westmorland, sketched Hauptmann Peters in the treatment room with Nurse Osbourne. Peters, Roth and Lamberty, wounded on the Kenley raid on August 18, 1940, were all patients in the hospital.





Left: **Oberleutnant Blume, a 109 pilot, was brought down at Barham in August 1940, and Leutnant Morr at Wadhurst in October.** *Right:* **Leutnant Max Himmelheber was shot down at Headcorn on the eve of Black Saturday in September 1940. (Himmelheber, a renowned engineer, was the man responsible for developing that versatile everyday product — chipboard.)**

Although so far as is known subterfuge was not employed to extract intelligence information from the patients, the staff there were nevertheless mindful to be alert for information which might be of use. On one occasion Sheila recalls that she discovered details of a flight plan written on a small piece of paper folded into a tiny square and concealed in a pocket. Apparently this had been overlooked when the prisoner had been searched on capture. On another occasion a prisoner asked a nurse if she could pass a message to a pre-war friend of his in the City of London. The nurse declined but reported the matter to Sister McDermott who recalls being cross that the identity of the intended recipient had not been revealed before the nurse declined the request. This information, feels Sheila, could well have been of interest to British Intelligence!

Security at the hospital was very strict, with armed guards being posted 24 hours a day in the Luftwaffe wards by soldiers with rifles and fixed bayonets. Sister McDermott one night discovered the sentry fast asleep in an armchair, his rifle propped against him.

'I carefully hid his rifle, then shook him awake. You can imagine his surprise and alarm. I doubt if he did it again! However, escape would have been virtually impossible

This picture of Leutnant Möllenbrok — on the left in the rear rank — was taken after he had recovered sufficiently to be transferred to Camp 23 at Godalming. Back row L-R: Möllenbrok, Blume, Kienzle, Himmelheber, and Treiber. Front row: Welte, Bäss, Hackbarth (son-in-law of Kesselring), Noster (parachute division, captured at Amsterdam) and Nothelfer, Sonderführer of KG51 shot down on August 12, 1940. Note how prisoners were permitted to keep and wear their awards.

Sister McDermott recalls vividly the 'Iron Cross episode' at the hospital: 'One of the prisoners had sent his pyjamas to the laundry and left his Iron Cross in the pocket. Of course when he realised his mistake a search was mounted but needless to say it was never found. After that we decided to lock all Iron Crosses in the dangerous drugs cabinet for safety in case somebody else took a fancy to one!'

It was during the run up to the Battle of Britain celebrations that the opportunity came for Sheila McDermott — now Mrs Sheila Bambridge — to meet one of her former patients when Thames Television brought Heinz Möllenbrok to England to be interviewed for their programme on *The Blitz*. Away from the cameras (save for that of your Editor), this was the touching moment of their reunion outside the old hospital entrance.

and those who could actually walk would not have got far in hospital pyjamas — although once I found a pair of pyjama bottoms which had been sewn to resemble trousers with creases and turn-ups cunningly concealed on the top of a lavatory cistern.'

Bombing of the hospital rather than escape was probably of greater concern to the authorities considering its proximity to one of the Luftwaffe's prime targets: the Arsenal. However, during the period of the Battle of Britain and the Blitz not one bomb hit the hospital, and Sheila recalled how this naturally gave rise to speculation that the Luftwaffe knew their comrades were there and thus carefully avoided hitting the building!

Some of the patients did, however, later go on to 'escape'. Bartels, Möllenbrok and Blume were repatriated via the Red Cross in 1943 because of the serious nature of their injuries. Wappler and Schnabel also made a rather less authorised bid for freedom in an escape attempt some while after they had left the Royal Herbert.

Because of the circumstances, the Luftwaffe ward can hardly be described as a happy place but, for those who were there, either as patients or staff, it was certainly a memorable period. Subject as it was to inspection by the International Red Cross, the ward offered the very best in medical care and those who were there as patients whom we have traced bear testimony to this by a desire to make contact with former Ward Sister McDermott. An unfortunate exception, however, was Hauptmann Schlichting, son-in-law of Erhard Milch. When contacted in 1980 he replied that he did not wish to discuss his wartime experiences and, furthermore, his treatment throughout 'was beneath human dignity and contravened the Geneva Convention'. From what we know he could not have been talking about his time at Woolwich!

A later patient, Leutnant Julius Heger, described his nurses at Woolwich as 'wonderful' and as 'angels administering to my every need'. Without doubt this is how the majority of the prisoner patients would wish to remember the place, where the principles of the Geneva Convention and good nursing were evidently rigorously upheld.

However, such spontaneity is lost once TV companies get to work with all their paraphernalia of lighting trailers, generators, floodlights, rehearsals, retakes and poetic licence. After all, why film a shot in the authentic ward (page 41) when an irrelevant weed-strewn courtyard or ruined corridor looks much more picturesque!

Heinz Mollenbrök, on behalf of the airmen treated at Woolwich, was instrumental in bringing Sheila's dedication to the attention of the German authorities, and in October 1990 Baron Hermann von Richthofen, German Ambassador to Britain, presented Sheila with a magnificent book in appreciation for what she had done for Anglo-German reconciliation and friendship.

Jeff Vincent now continues the story and describes the work of the interrogation centre through which uninjured crewmen were processed. When looking for a picture to introduce his article, we could not resist publishing this photograph taken by one of our readers, Barry Bruff, using his Box Brownie on his aunt's chicken farm at Butley, near Rendlesham, in Suffolk. The Heinkel had been brought down in the early hours of September 5, 1940, by a Blenheim flown by Pilot Officer M. J. Herrick and Sergeant J. S. Pugh — possibly it is Herrick who has set up the bottles on the tail for some target practise, Al Capone style! Barry told us that all the countryside in the background is now covered with 40-foot conifers and all that remained of the huts of the army camp on the right are the concrete foundations. However, the point to be made is that this was the Gruppenkommandeur's machine of Stab I/KG1 and, although four of the occupants were killed, the fifth man, Oberleutnant Hans-Dieter Biebrach was captured unhurt, a good example of a prime candidate for CSDIC.

THE COMBINED SERVICES INTERROGATION CENTRE

By Jeff Vincent

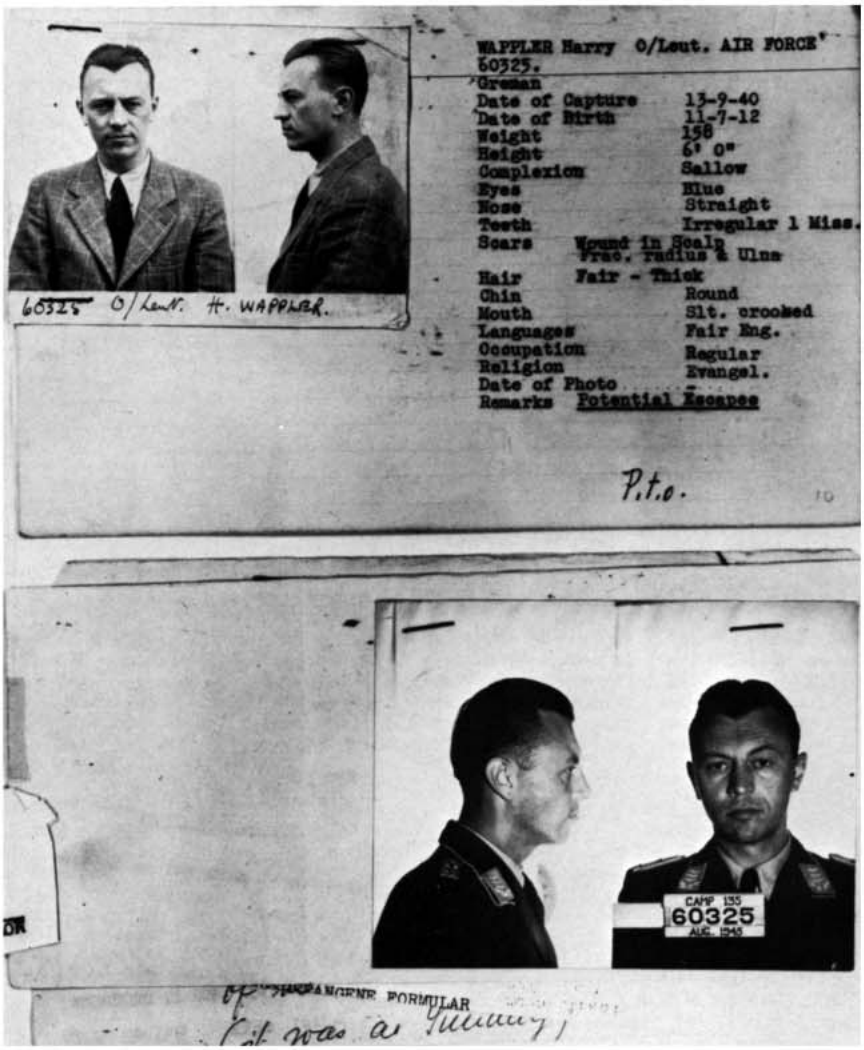
Just outside the quaint Buckinghamshire village of Old Beaconsfield lies the site of Wilton Park. The name goes back to the 13th century when the Whelton family owned the estate, but for the next 300 years its history is uncertain. Then, after several changes of ownership, it was sold to the Du Pres, a family of landowners and soldiers, remaining in their hands for 171 years. Josias Du Pre, retired from the East India Company, had a house built on the estate, 'a fine large modern structure in the Palladian style, built of Portland stone' and dubbed the White House by the locals. Originally built on two floors and having a basement and with stables and servant accommodation to one side, it was later enlarged by the addition of a third floor.

The drive leading to the White House was nearly half a mile long and led past the grounds of a local cricket club. At the outbreak of war the site was leased to the War Office who later turned it into a top-secret establishment: an interrogation centre for prisoners of war, with the title Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre (CSDIC).

At the outbreak of war the first CSDIC was formed by the War Office at the Tower of London, but by December 1939 all three sections (Army, Navy and Air Force) had moved to Trent Park at Cockfosters in north London. The move was forced by the need for more space, given the increasing number of PoWs being passed through the interrogation system. At the same time the decision was taken to build two additional camps — at Wilton Park (Camp 300) and Latimer — both near Beaconsfield. These two complexes were not occupied until July 1942, and they were purpose-built in order to facilitate their principal aim: that of extracting the maximum amount of information useful to the war effort from the captured Germans and Italians. At Wilton Park the White House was turned into an officers' mess for staff and interrogators, while a series of Nissen huts was built to accommodate the staff of other ranks.

Prisoners were housed in a compound comprising low, flat-roofed brick and con-

Up until July 1942, the Combined Services Detailed Interrogation Centre was located at Trent Park, Cockfosters, Group Captain S. D. Felkin remaining head of the organisation throughout the war. When Oberleutnant Victor Mölders (brother of the more famous Werner) force-landed at Guestling on October 7, 1940, he was a prize catch for CSDIC and he was despatched to Cockfosters the following day. No pictures appear to have been taken (or have survived) of the mansion during the war, but fortunately Victor was something of an artist and sketched himself being marched inside *(left). Right:* **The building is now a teacher training centre (see also *After the Battle* No. 2 and *The Blitz Then and Now Volume 1*, page 114).**



When CSDIC moved to Trent Park in December 1939 from its first home at the Tower of London, it comprised separate sections for Army, Navy and Air Force personnel. Early in 1940 the Army section was known as War Office department M.I.9(h) and the Navy Section, Admiralty department N.I.D.11 (later N.I.D.1 (P/W) and N.I.D.3 (P/W) for processing German and Italian prisoners respectively). Meanwhile the RAF unit was designated Air Ministry department A.I.1(k). An important first step was the photographing and numbering of all prisoners — this is the record for Harry Wappler (after he left his bed at Woolwich — page 39). The top card is not dated so the remarks could be as a result of his escape attempt on November 24, 1941.

crete cells, linked by four inter-connecting corridors. The low roofs were painted in camouflage colours to escape low-level enemy reconnaissance. All the cells were centrally heated and the majority had four beds in each.

The warders were hand-picked for reliability and discretion and were all sergeants in the Brigade of Guards. The task was carried out primarily by interrogators chosen for their knowledge of Germany, its language and its people. A good interrogator had to be a practical psychologist, with a capacity for rapid appraisal of character as he had to quickly weigh up his interviewee and decide whether to adopt a friendly or official approach. In other words, interrogators had to decide on the spot if a particular prisoner was likely to be won over by argument, by controlled anger or by a gift of cigarettes or chocolate. The success of the opening gambit would in the majority of cases dictate the success of future conversations.

Attention to detail helped in the task. For instance, interrogators were usually of the same generation as their victims, and of the same Service in an attempt to create empathy. A good working knowledge of German or Italian was essential but linguistic perfection would make a prisoner suspicious and deprive him of the chance to patronise his interrogator, thereby opening himself up to dialogue and possible information extraction. Given the notorious German respect for authority, interrogators at Wilton Park often found it an advantage to be of higher rank than the interrogated prisoner, an easily resolved issue when one had a number of different jackets with different badges of rank at his disposal! Interrogators were urged by their seniors to use patience, perseverance and determination to succeed. Some recorded the content of all interviews down to the minutest detail soon after the interview in order not to forget any scrap of information, however insignificant.

As experience accumulated, interrogators learned how to quickly recognise the personality confronting them and tailor their approach accordingly. The most difficult type of prisoner, however, remained the polite, but suspicious and firm type who would not be drawn by gambits: 'Of course you know Hitler is wrong and he will lead you to destruction'. This sort of prisoner could only be worn down by perseverance and patience.

Methods of interrogation varied from the double act of 'soft and hard interrogators' where one would promise retribution and the other act as the prisoner's friend, to the 'expert' where an interrogator dazzled the prisoner with an in-depth knowledge of his service, its tactics and history. The expert was in reality saying to him: 'You might as well talk, as I know everything anyway'. At no stage were any threats made as it was established that these were counter-productive. Innuendos and suggestions were found to be much more unsettling and therefore fruitful.

Aircrews were usually segregated from one another in order to break down their stories and if possible play one against the other. This was very difficult, as the cohesion and loyalty of men who had trained, worked and fought together was in some cases considerable.

Other tricks were also used to gain information. Interrogators would take their captives for walks in the grounds and stop in mid-conversation under a pre-determined tree which had a hidden microphone installed. By pressing a button the interrogator could signal an NCO in a control room to switch on the mike and record the conversation (although a recording was only made in cases where considerably detailed information was expected to be gleaned). NCOs

As the war progressed and the tide began to turn, it became clear that expanded facilities would be required to deal with the increasing number of prisoners falling into Allied hands. (The USAAF decided to totally integrate with the RAF air interrogation centre when they entered the war in Europe.) Purpose-built facilities were therefore constructed in the grounds of two country houses west of London. This is the entrance to Wilton Park, just east of Beaconsfield, as it appears today.

Left: **The front of the White House circa 1950. Marshal Messe and his staff were accommodated in the upper floor of the house. The luxuriant garden was used to good effect by interrogators to extract information during their 'wired' walks with their captives. A large number of Nissen huts were also erected in the grounds to provide additional accommodation.**

Right: **The White House nearing its end. This picture is believed to have been taken in the summer of 1968 a few months before completion of the ugly accommodation block in the background and the subsequent demolition of the White House and extensive landscaping of the grounds. Wilton Park remains a restricted Service establishment today.**

would direct the traffic of these odd couples in the grounds of the White House all day, in order to ensure that the groups would not bump into one another.

Microphone operators, editors (those responsible for the collation of the intelligence gleaned) and interrogators would have a brief conference before each interrogation to discuss what the value of the prisoner was likely to be and what questions the interrogator proposed asking.

Calendars and clocks would be changed, and different entrances to Wilton Park used in order to disorientate the prisoner. Stool-pigeons were also used in conjunction with microphones. The first of these used at Wilton Park were German or Austrian refugees, but later deserters or turned prisoners were used. For their safety they were housed in a secluded cottage in the camp, away from prying eyes, and a special British officer assigned to look after their welfare. The stool-pigeon, posing as a PoW, would be introduced into a cell already occupied by another (genuine) prisoner. At first the two would formally bow to each other and not much talk would ensue. Then the stool-pigeon would proceed to win the prisoner over by flattery, or by impressing his bona-fides and trustworthiness onto his cell-mate. To gain his confidence the pigeon would first try to find out where his cell-mate came from (in this case, say, the city of Hannover) and then be taken away for 'interrogation'. In reality he would go to a resources room, study a street plan of Hannover and look up in the telephone directory the name of someone living in the same or a nearby street as the prisoner. On his return to the cell he would boast about the way he had confounded his interrogators and say: 'By the way, I had an aunt who lived in Hannover, she used to go to a Dr Brandt who lived near you, do you know him?' This would establish the pigeon as a bona-fide prisoner. He would then proceed to gain in conversation as much intelligence as possible.

The author has managed to trace two of the interrogators from CSDIC, but neither of them knew, or was willing to reveal, the identities of the stool-pigeons they worked with. Indeed, for obvious reasons the wartime activities of the Centres were shrouded in secrecy, even the GOC-in-C of Eastern Command, in which Wilton Park was situated, was denied access to the camps. The chain of command went straight from Major (later Lieutenant-Colonel) L. St Clare Grondona, the Australian commanding officer, to the War Office.

THE GENERALS' CAGE

Towards the middle of 1943 the first high-ranking prisoners started to arrive at Wilton Park. On May 18, Marshal Messe, recently captured in North Africa, together with some 15 other Italian generals and admirals, arrived at the White House and were lodged on the two upper floors of the mansion. These had been converted in a hurry into a 'cage', complete with barbed wire at the windows and flood-lights hastily retrieved from a depot in Windsor where they had last been used at the coronation of King George VI. The Italians' baggage indicated that the officers had campaigned in style, complete with cigars and spirits, while Messe had £1,000 in £5 notes.

By 1945 Wilton Park had a large number of German general officers. Field-Marshals von Rundstedt and Busch and scores of generals were brought there; either straight from capture via the London District Cage, or from other camps such as Grizedale Hall *(see After the Battle No. 2)*.

At first their outdoor activities were res-

A very rare picture, probably taken in the mid-50s, of the inside of the White House when it had reverted to being an officers' mess. Although the building had seen better days, note the ornate stucco of the decor.

tricted to a compound of roughly an acre, guarded by Bren gun positions, but after a while restrictions were lifted and the generals were allowed to walk around at leisure. Generals Dittmar and Bassenge became keen gardeners and turned the derelict walled garden of the White House into an allotment. Major-General Gerd Bassenge's records show that he was born on November 18, 1897 at Ettlingen and he was captured at Metheline in North Africa on May 9, 1943 after the surrender of the Afrika Korps. He was a handyman as demonstrated by his reaction to the birds eating most of the cherries from his allotment. As Major Grondona recalled: 'For some days he was busy with pieces of wire, iron, and a variety of tins on which he got to work with hammer, snips and home-made rivets. He soon had an impressive array of ingenious contraptions, for example, small windmills that caused tins to rotate and rattle pebbles with kettle-drum-like effect' which scared the birds off the General's precious fruits. He was also responsible for carving wooden sticks for the frail Gerd von Rundstedt. On most summer days Rundstedt, a stick in each hand, would walk down the drive with his son, Hans Gerd, to watch cricket being played at the local club.

THE RE-EDUCATION CENTRE

The CSDIC closed down at the end of 1945 and its functions were transferred to the War Office. Most PoWs were either repatriated or moved to other camps. All German senior officers were transferred by rail to Special Camp 11 at Island Farm, near Bridgend, on January 9, 1946 *(see After the Battle No. 67)*.

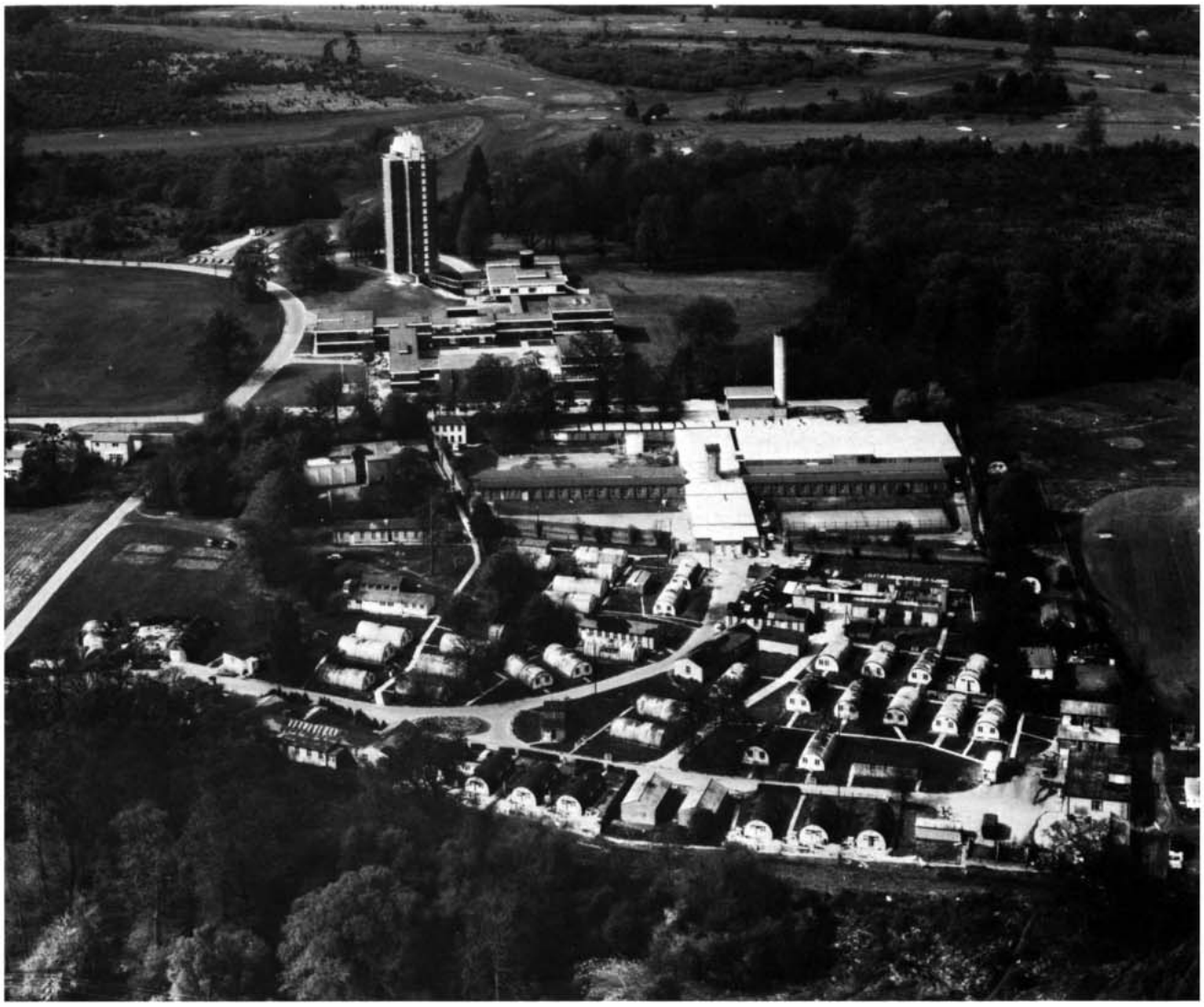
Three days later, Wilton Park's functions changed completely. The camp's running was taken over by the Foreign Office and it became a centre for the re-education of German PoWs, the brainchild of an Oxford history don of German extraction, Heinz Koeppler. The aim of the centre was to teach selected Germans, used to unquestioning obedience in a totalitarian regime, how to listen to and respect other people's views and to take part in free discussion on any topic of interest such as current affairs, history, politics and so on. Some 300 selected prisoners at a time from all over the United Kingdom were brought to Wilton Park for six- to eight-week courses. Each course had a tutor and a 'veteran' to help him. Kenneth Morgan, an interrogator turned tutor, remembers the enthusiasm of some of his veteran prisoners who had already completed a course and had volunteered to stay on and help with the group discussions. The Centre helped lay the foundations of a democratic Germany and fostered good Anglo-German relations in the difficult post-war years. Among the distinguished visiting lecturers were Lord Beveridge, Bertrand Russell, Quintin Hogg (now Lord Hailsham), Lady Astor and Lord Lindsay, Master of Balliol.

The secrecy surrounding the wartime activity of Wilton Park has made documentation difficult. To the author's knowledge no wartime photographs of the camp exist. After the closure of the re-education centre, the site continued to be used as a military installation as it is to this day, further restricting the availability of information.

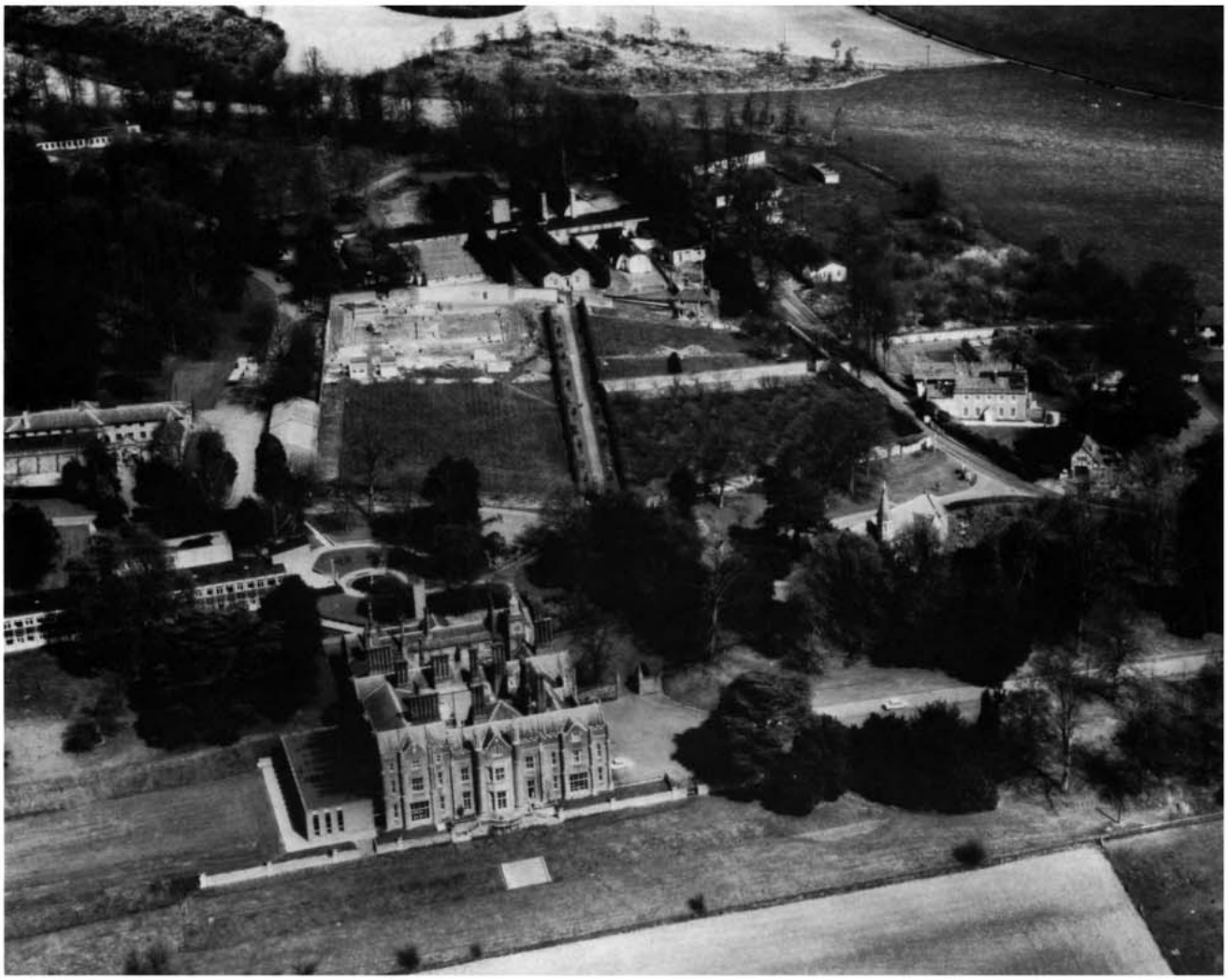
The compound in which the cells had been housed was demolished in the mid-60s and the White House was also destroyed in 1969 to make way for a 15-floor accommodation block. The long approach drive to the house still exists, as do its iron railings, and the only other memento is the enclosed red-brick garden. Bassenge's contraptions have long gone, and so have his cherries, to make way for a car park!

The Foreign Office continues to run a 'Wilton Park', but this is in Steyning, West Sussex, and, although the name was retained when the Centre closed in 1948, its functions these days are completely different. An account of the Centre's activities may be found in *The Wilton Park Story* by Milton Kiezer, although the interrogation centre is never mentioned.

Despite several walking field trips, the author was disappointed, though not surprised, to find no trace of the microphones and electrical paraphernalia in the Park's trees. It is a pity that no more material is available on the varied and unique wartime activities of the camp. Its contribution to the war effort was considerable but, up to now, unsung.



This air view by Aerofilms looking north was fortuitously taken in 1968 — after the White House had gone but before the Nissen hutted camp had been demolished. Today nothing is left to indicate Wilton Park's wartime rôle.



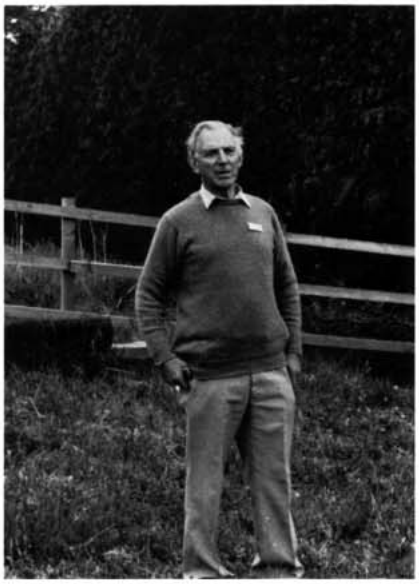
The other CSDIC location was six miles to the north of Wilton Park in the grounds of Latimer House which lies just east of Amersham. In this case we were very fortunate to visit the estate in March 1987, just as it was in the process of being sold by the Ministry of Defence. As the CSDIC accommodation had been retained after the war for use by the National Defence College, we had an unrivalled opportunity to inspect and photograph the wartime facilities before they were demolished — one of the conditions on any would-be purchaser in the tender documents. This Aerofilms shot was taken in April 1972 with the main house in the foreground and the cell block at the end of the so-called King's Avenue.

LATIMER

The picturesque village of Latimer, also in Buckinghamshire, was the unlikely setting for the second interrogation centre. This quiet community is built into the slopes of a hill gently rolling down towards the banks of the River Chess, and is just a short car journey away from Wilton Park.

The earliest inhabitants of the area were prehistoric hunters, and they were followed by an uninterrupted stream of dwellers, including Romans, Saxons and Normans who built the first manor house, the first mention of which dates back to 1194. In Elizabethan times the manor house, situated as one would expect on the brow of the hill dominating the whole stretch of the Chess valley, was enlarged. The manor, known as Latimer House, passed to the ownership of the Cavendish family in 1812. In 1836 the house was gutted by fire, but it was rebuilt shortly afterwards in a mixture of Elizabethan and Gothic styles. In 1939, the house and its extensive grounds were requisitioned by the War Office and used until 1942 as temporary accommodation for a succession of major units until the need arose to expand CSDIC.

Left: **The entrance to the main drive to the house and** *right* **the secondary gate to the interrogation block complex.**



Left: **When our author, Jeff Vincent, showed this picture taken by your Editor in 1987 to Matthew Sullivan, former interrogator at Latimer, he immediately recognised the left-hand windows as belonging to his and Group Captain Felkin's offices.** *Right:* **However, by the time that Jeff could take 'Flight Lieutenant Forrest' back to the spot, nothing was left.**

AT THE COURT OF OBERST KING

In July 1942, Latimer, together with Wilton Park, became a CSDIC under the command of Wing Commander (later Group Captain) S. D. Felkin. In order to be able to accommodate PoWs, the grounds underwent extensive transformation during early 1942. A long, low, flat-roofed brick building with four corridors was built. This was overlooked by several brick towers with observation windows and gunports. Each corridor had several cells with small windows situated near the ceiling. Near each group of cells was a more spacious room used to accommodate eavesdropping equipment and manned by German or Austrian refugees ready to tape-record conversations of interest between prisoners. This type of room was called 'Mother' and access to it was severely restricted. At the end of each section of the cell blocks were gates manned 24 hours a day by senior NCO guards.

The grounds were fenced off with barbed wire and lighting was installed along the perimeter. Security around the camp was tight, photography was forbidden and the villagers of Latimer had no idea of what went on behind the wire, having been told that the unit was now a supply depot.

The CO and his interrogators shared offices and a pool of secretaries and typists in an administration block leading off from one of the cell corridors. In a similar environment ideas were quickly exchanged and pieces of intelligence shared to try to make them fit into a larger jigsaw.

The modus operandi for the extraction of information was very similar to the one already described for Wilton Park and consisted of a mixture of deception and innuendo. Wing Commander Felkin was known to German prisoners as 'Colonel King'. He conducted most interrogations of senior officers and, as he was one of the original two RAF interrogators from Tower of London days, was one of the most experienced. He had served in the First World War and then had had a successful career in business, a somewhat common background found in effective interrogators. His favourite time of the day was at night. Over a glass of whisky in a room fitted out as a sitting room, he would slowly convince a PoW that Germany had lost the war. This he proved by taking the prisoner for a night out in London to show the German that the city, far from being a ruin as Goebbels claimed, was bustling with activity and night life. His German was not perfect, but fluent; an advantage as we have seen.

Among the other interrogators was Flight Lieutenant 'Geoffrey Forrest' (Matthew Barry Sullivan) who kept a diary of events.

Sullivan, a German scholar, considered himself a 'soft interrogator' and managed to earn the respect of the German airmen and,

The extensive interrogation and cell block fell within the curtilage of Lot 2, a 36-acre plot which included Latimer House itself. The Central Disposals Unit of the Property Services Agency had already applied to Chiltern District Council for change of use of the house to offices and one of the planning conditions was that the wartime buildings 'shall be demolished . . . because the buildings concerned are primarily of a temporary construction and were erected for specific military purposes. Accordingly, as this site is within the Green Belt and the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Council considers that, as their particular purposes have ended, they should be removed.' Our only comment is that if historical considerations are of no consequence when judging the importance of the retention of any building, then Hadrian's Wall, the Tower, and many other military constructions down the ages should never have been preserved.

Left and above: **The exterior and interior of the administrative wing.**

eventually, their confidence. To this day he thinks this was helped by his pilot's wings and the ribbon of the Africa Star on his tunic (both real, as he had served as a pilot in the Mediterranean in the early years of the war).

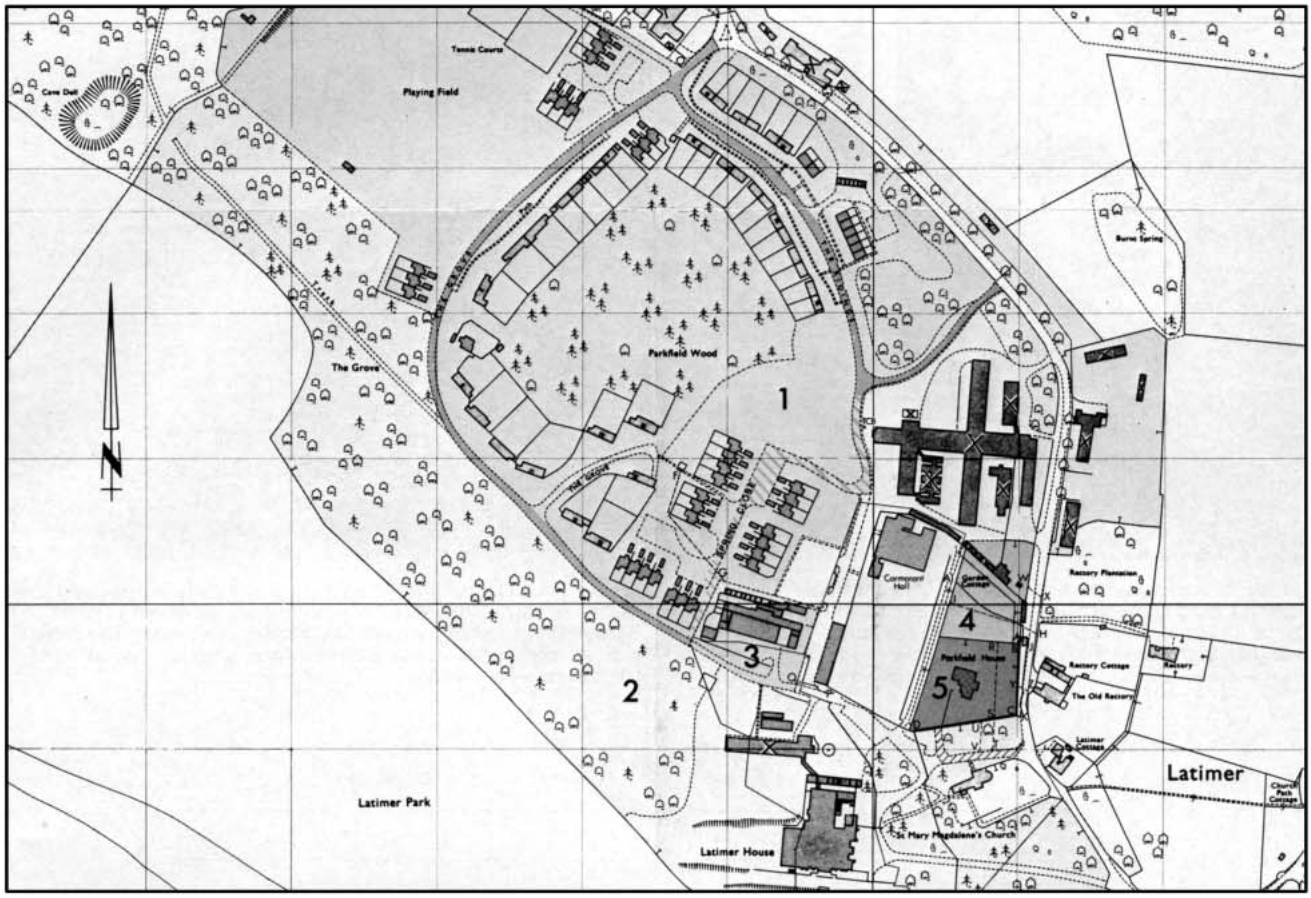
Latimer House was used as an officers' mess, although some of the rooms on the first floor housed the typists engaged on copying the transcripts of some of the bugged conversations betweeen prisoners. As the war went on, increasing numbers of prisoners were interrogated, until after the German surrender only the most senior and interesting were accommodated at Latimer until its closure in December 1945, when all the remaining senior officers were transferred to Island Farm Camp.

PEACETIME

The interrogation centre buildings stood empty for just under a year until in late 1946 the government decided to use the house and the former centre to accommodate the Joint Services Staff College, a tri-service senior officers' establishment. Some of the buildings were slightly modified and part of the wartime wiring and security was removed. Some Nissen huts were demolished to make way for a lecture theatre in the 1960s. The house continued, with little change, to function as the mess.

The College was finally closed in 1985 and the house and grounds, including the former interrogation centre buildings, were sold at auction shortly afterwards with the caveat

The cell block still retained its barred windows *above* **and security gates** *below left* **inside. We were told that this corridor** *(below right)* **originally had a wall running right down the centre, on the line of the two remaining drainpipes, dividing it into two narrow corridors in front of the cells.**



History expunged with a cross. As at Wilton Park so at Latimer . . . All traces of CSDIC now removed from the map yet should such decisions be arbitrarily made by those without a sense of history? Indeed, is it the right of any one generation to wipe out what will undoubtedly be considered of historical value to another?

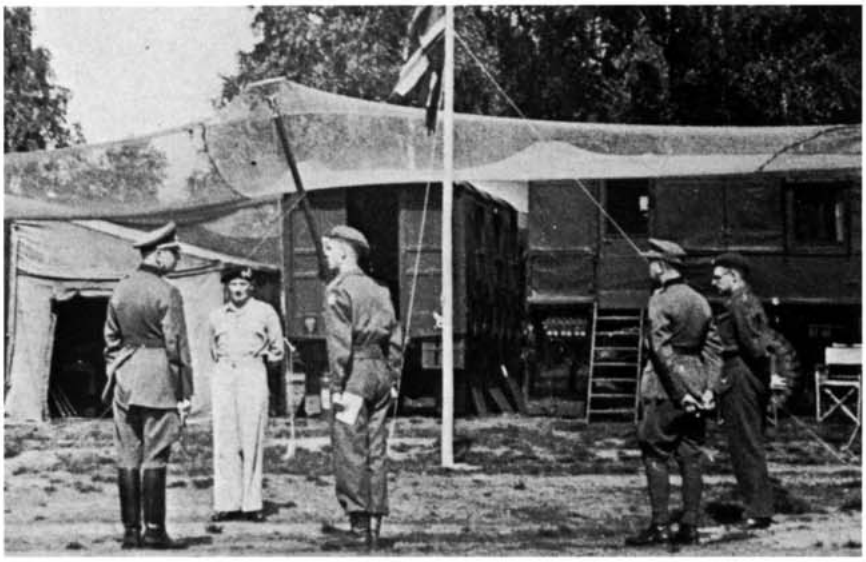
that the buyer must demolish the wartime additions. These buildings were levelled to make way for an executive housing development and the house and its stables were modernised and turned into a residential training school for a firm of management consultants.

We visited the grounds when the estate was first put up for auction and took some pictures but, unfortunately, given the ban on photography during the war, we could not find any contemporary pictures to use as comparisons. We visited again in 1990 by which time all wartime structures had been demolished, leaving the modern visitor with little to see, a problem exacerbated by the fact that access to the estate and house are restricted. Entry was eventually gained thanks to David Harman, an old friend of the author, who runs the training school.

Matthew Sullivan, now a retired author and broadcaster, came with us on what turned out to be his second trip back to the grounds since 1945. Although initially bewildered by the absence of the huts, the former interrogator led us to a tree-lined avenue (he could not remember its name) which connected Latimer House to the CSDIC buildings and along which Wing Commander Felkin used to take his prisoners for walks in the hope of extracting information. Mr Harman rapidly informed us that this is known as King's Avenue, and one wonders whether 'Oberst King' made that much of a lasting impression on the place!

The only part of the original wartime buildings left standing are the MT sheds which are situated opposite the housing development. They are now used as a pottery but are the only indication of the recent history of Latimer, a place which made a distinctive contribution to Britain's war effort.

Matthew Sullivan on a nostalgic walk along King's Avenue. What secrets were gleaned along its path . . . what memories linger on of those who were the subjects of Oberst King?



During research for this feature, Jeff Vincent discovered to his surprise that Generalfeldmarschall Ernst Busch, the commander of all German forces in North-West Europe at the end of the war, had died in captivity in England. As a reminder, the photos above show him *left* when in command of German troops facing Soviet forces on the Eastern Front early in 1944 and *right* facing another Field-Marshal at Lüneburg on May 11, 1945 — an occasion when Monty gave him orders concerning the disposition of the surrendered German forces under his command. (Associated Press/IWM)

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH

GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON

Application Number 7122339

REGISTRATION DISTRICT Amersham

1945. DEATH in the Sub-district of Amersham in the County of Buckingham

Columns:— 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and Where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of registrar
119	Seventeenth July 1945. No. 7 P.W. Camp (Annexe) Beaconsfield U.D	Ernst BUSCH	Male	60 years	Generalfeldmarschall German Army.	1.(a) Chronic Myocarditis. Certified by J.S.Smith M.B.	Lt.Col Clare Grondona Major Commandant and Chief Resident Officer No. 7 P.W.Camp (Annexe) Beaconsfield.	Fourteenth September 1945.	W.E.Stokes Registrar

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned. Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, LONDON, under the Seal of the said Office, the 29th day of June 1990

This certificate is issued in pursuance of the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953. Section 34 provides that any certified copy of an entry purporting to be sealed or stamped with the seal of the General Register Office shall be received as evidence of the birth or death to which it relates without any further or other proof of the entry, and no certified copy purporting to have been given in the said Office shall be of any force or effect unless it is sealed or stamped as aforesaid.

DX 506617

CAUTION:—It is an offence to falsify a certificate or to make or knowingly use a false certificate or a copy of a false certificate intending it to be accepted as genuine to the prejudice of any person, or to possess a certificate knowing it to be false without lawful authority.

GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE ENGLAND

In July, Generalfeldmarschall Busch was sent to Britain and on to Wilton Park. Many of the captured generals were ill and shattered by the defeat of the Reich. Ritter von Thoma, for example, started exhibiting signs of the illness that would eventually lead him to having his left leg amputated. He would only perk up during heated discussions about past desert battles with his one-time enemy and now frequent visitor, Lieutenant-General Sir Oliver Leese. As far as Busch was concerned, it was almost as if he was suffering from a broken heart for he passed away in his sleep within a few days of his arrival in England. He died on July 17 and was given a funeral procession with all due honours within the camp. Only von Runstedt and eight other generals were allowed to be present at the burial which took place at the Aldershot Military Cemetery on July 20. They travelled by rail with curtains drawn, and Busch, holder of the Pour le Mérite and the Knight's Cross with Oak Leaves, was buried with few honours. The ceremony was conducted by Army chaplain Father E. Plowman of Linthorpe, Middlesbrough, partly in Latin and partly in German. Rundstedt expected a full military funeral with a Guards' firing party, but the old soldier had underestimated the depth of feeling that the newly-discovered extermination camps had engendered in the British nation. That night back in his room he complained bitterly to the commandant, Major Grondona, who could do little to comfort the old soldier. News of Busch's death was withheld from the press for two months; in fact the death was not even notified to the Registrar by Major Grondona until September 14 — the day *after* the press reports! Even then the War Office stated that he had died in hospital in Nottinghamshire. We were intrigued at the subterfuge but even more amazed to find that he was still buried in Britain as we had assumed that his family would have wanted his remains repatriated to Germany. We discovered that he had been exhumed from Aldershot Military Cemetery in 1963 and was now buried with a simple headstone at the German War Cemetery at Cannock — surely the highest ranking German of the Second World War still to remain in Britain.

A competition . . . and an announcement

It is not our usual style to run competitions in *After the Battle*, but recent events in Berlin spelling the real end to the Second World War gives us the excuse to make an exception. Although German reunification was a constant theme and a goal of Western politicians back in the 1950s, the possibility appeared to become more and more remote as the years rolled by with East and West Germany growing further apart in prosperity and ideology. Only two years ago, when writing about the partial demolition of the Führerbunker in issues 61 and 62, never in a thousand years did I expect to see the end of the wall in my lifetime.

And that set me thinking . . . about all the people who would have gloried in the Day of Unity: from Kennedy and Adenauer, to modern day peacemakers like John Lennon, even our own loved ones dearly departed. The unbelievable had come to pass.

It was in March 1946 that Churchill first spoke about the Iron Curtain — how *he* would have loved to see its end. I have therefore chosen to feature the champion of freedom in our competition. We all remember his famous V sign but how many know of the difficulty expressed by his staff to get him to do it the right way round. John Colville, Churchill's one-time private secretary, wrote in September 1941 that 'The PM *will* give the V sign with two fingers in spite of the representations repeatedly made to him that this gesture has quite another significance!' (For the benefit of our German friends, it means the equivalent of your upraised middle finger.)

However, I had never seen a photograph of Churchill 'in action' — until this year. Quite by chance we found this marvellous shot taken while he was visiting Bradford with Mrs C in December 1942. What an incredible expression on his face — a real gem. And even the official caption is humorous: 'The Prime Minister's famous victory sign was much in evidence'.

Now I want you to give us your own caption for this picture — short, pithy and to the point. The three entries judged to be the most apt will receive a copy of any one of our books. So let us have your captions, one per reader, not forgetting to give us the book of your choice. We cannot enter into correspondence on the subject but will publish the winners in our next edition. Closing date December 31, 1990.

I would also like to advise readers that we are co-operating with Major and Mrs Holt (*see issue No. 39*) to run the first *After the Battle* battlefield tour. Tonie and Valmai Holt have built up a wide choice of tours in all parts of the globe, but for a long time have wanted us to do a special *ATB* tour for them. The first one to be held next year will feature the bloody battle of the Hurtgen Forest in the autumn of 1944 and Karel Margry, author of a feature on the battle to appear in our next issue, will be your guide for the tour which will include the Battle for Aachen covered in *After the Battle* No. 42.

The battle in the forest, which the Germans had fortified with wire, pillboxes and mines, cost the US First Army alone over 23,000 wounded, missing, captured or killed, with a further 8,000 men withdrawn from combat exhaustion. The drain on the five American divisions involved was out of all proportion to the gain, as was the loss of German units squandered in the defence of Aachen — which Hitler had ordered to be held to the last man. As it was, it became the first large German city to fall.

The itinerary will give you the opportunity to make your own 'then and now' photographic record in a unique photo guide prepared by *After the Battle* specially for the tour. Break through the Siegfried Line using the same route as the first American units in September 1944 and, armed with your camera, fight again the battle of Aachen, street by street. Visit Colonel Wilck's massive city command post bunker, still bearing its wartime scars. Walk the Kall Trail, still alive with the debris of war, where American tanks crossed a wooded valley to outflank German positions . . . and visit the grave of Generalfeldmarschall Model, buried with his men on the battlefield after his suicide to avoid capture early in 1945.

For further details do not contact us but write direct to:

Major and Mrs Holts' Battlefield Tours,
Golden Key Building,
15 Market Street, Sandwich, Kent, CT13 9DA
Telephone: 0304 612248
Fax: 0304 614930

THE EDITOR